Institutional Researchers and Equitable Outcomes: An Examination of Factors Driving Their Success

Qiana Nichole Davis
Claremont Graduate University

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Institutional Researchers and Equitable Outcomes:

An Examination of Factors Driving Their Success

By

Qiana N. Davis

Claremont Graduate University

2023
APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Qiana Davis as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meritng the Doctor of Philosophy in Education degree.

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Clinical Professor of Education

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Abstract

The state of California has the largest community college system in the United States with 1.8 million students from diverse backgrounds and 64% percent of students who are economically disadvantaged (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2022; Felix & Castro, 2018). California community colleges also experience inequitable outcomes for racially minoritized students and students who are economically disadvantaged (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2022). McArthur (2016) posits that Offices of Institutional Research (OIR) are also critical in addressing and closing equity gaps.

Through interviews with current and former institutional researchers (n=21), this qualitative case study identified environmental influences associated with institutional researchers’ (IR) effective use data to address inequitable outcomes for community college students including shifting organizations, leadership influences, interactions with faculty and staff, the power of peers, staffing challenges, emotional intelligence, equity practice growth, peer learning, and advocacy. The conceptual framework for this study integrated Ford’s Living System’s Framework (Ford, 1987), Equity Minded Practitioners (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2015), and Bronfenbrenner’s (1993) Ecological Systems Theory to provide a lens to view the institutional researcher. It also integrated Berger’s (2000) Five Dimensions of Educational Organization Behavior, Bronfenbrenner’s (1993) Ecological Systems Theory, and Smith’s (2020) Framework for Diversity to examine the college, district, or system. Interviews elicited evidence supporting some elements of each of the frameworks. The top three themes were shifting organizations, leadership influence, and interactions with faculty and staff. Most importantly, the broad theme of the findings suggests that Equity Minded Practitioners practices when applied to institutional researchers included emotional intelligence as an additional element.
Among the recommendations identified based on the findings, the most salient recommendation is related to equity-minded senior leaders and institutional researchers. Senior leaders need to allocate sufficient resources for staffing to support equity work in IR offices and to further align their mission statements with the equity plans to support shared responsibility. Institutional researchers need space for peer interactions, support for IR affinity group networks, and learning opportunities to strengthen the development of interpersonal skills to support equity focused conversations.

*Key words*: institutional researchers, institutional effectiveness, equity-mindedness, equitable outcomes, data use, community colleges, equity, economic disadvantaged, equitable outcomes, community college system
Dedications

To my children, Keira, and Jenna, who motivated me every day to keep going on this dissertation.

To my parents, Timothy Davis, Janine Davis, Cheryl Lindsay, and Ozro Lindsay who supported me in any way they could throughout this journey.

To my family who cheered me on from my living room and from miles away to help me get to this finish line.
Acknowledgements

While there are numerous individuals who supported me in this academic and professional endeavor, I would like to share words of appreciation for a few individuals who played an instrumental role in my doctoral journey.

First, I would like to thank my advisor and dissertation committee chair, Dr. Gwen Garrison for her patience, wisdom, and commitment to supporting me as I worked to complete this program. She served as an example and model of how to be a scholar-practitioner focused on equity with humility and kindness. Her proactive approach to supervision, which included high expectations, clear instructions, and a critical eye paired with humor helped me to advance my thinking and improve my research skills.

I would also like to extend sincere gratitude to my committee, which consists of Drs. Dina Maramba and June Hilton. As instructors for my qualitative and quantitative methods coursework respectively, they elevated my thinking about research methods. As committee members, they helped me to set more reasonable data collection timelines and expanded my thinking about how to best learn more about institutional researchers.

My colleagues at Engage R+D were also instrumental in helping me complete this process by providing time, space, and thought partnership. Our work in education helped me to understand more about the systems and the practical challenges of equity focused data use. I would also like to thank my former colleagues at California State University, San Bernardino who encouraged me to return to school to pursue my doctorate. Specifically, I’d like to thank Drs. Jean Peacock, Kimberly Costino, and Francisca Beer who repeatedly reminded me that this would be possible.
I would also like to thank everyone who participated in interviews for this study. Each person took time out of their incredibly busy schedules and in many instances, they shared deep personal stories about their experience. I appreciate their willingness to trust me with their story and for their vulnerability to help us understand more about their journey.

I believe that it is impossible to get through this type of program without a village of people who help make it possible. My family has been instrumental in this process. I want to thank my mother for instilling in me the belief in pushing forward against all odds and being there for me with the kids when we needed support. I would also like to thank my father for sitting and listening to me talk about this study more times that I’m sure he’d like to remember and for teaching me at a very early age how to exercise discipline in my academic pursuits. To my sister-cousins who have been with me every step of the way celebrating milestones and standing at my side, I want to thank you Kelshna, Shana, Monae, and Nicole.

My friends and colleagues have been there to provide a listening ear, thought partnership, and so much more. I want to thank you April, Cristina, Mary, Namrata, Ebony, Tari, Nancy, Jossie, and Stephen for your specific words of encouragement and guidance at pivotal moments in this journey.

I would like to end this section by acknowledging Keira and Jenna. When I started this program, they were in second and fifth grade (they are currently in ninth and twelfth grade). They accompanied me to libraries and coffee shops. They spoke in whispers so I could focus and write. They shared their mom with a Macbook for more years than I had ever anticipated. This dissertation and degree would not be possible without them, and I want them to always remember the line from our favorite bedtime story “I’ll love you forever, I’ll like you for always as long as I’m living, my baby you’ll be” (Munsch, 1986).
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“Community colleges are an essential part of our recovery in the present -- and our prosperity in the future. This place can make the future better, not just for these individuals but for America.”

-The White House, 2009

Since their emergence in 1901, community colleges in the United States have evolved into institutions that provide access to post-secondary education and have the capacity to moderate social and economic mobility (Baber et al, 2019; Cohen et al, 2014). American Association of Community Colleges (2004) stated that “Community colleges are centers of educational opportunity . . . inclusive institutions that welcome all who desire to learn, regardless of wealth, heritage, or previous academic experience” (p.1). Community colleges are perceived as open admissions institutions that provide students from racially minoritized groups, students with varying levels of academic preparation, and students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds with access to postsecondary education (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014). With complex missions of preparing students for associate degrees, transfer to four-year institutions, workforce preparation, and in some instances offering baccalaureate degrees, community colleges play a critical role in the economic and social vitality of their surrounding community (Baber et al, 2019; Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014; Dowd, 2003; Rhoads & Valadez, 1996).

In the time since their inception, the number of students attending community colleges in the United States has grown substantially. In 2022, 39% of undergraduate students in the United States attended community colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, 2022). According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) (2022), community
colleges welcome 36% of all first-time freshmen, half of all Native American (53%) and Hispanic (50%) undergraduate students, and a substantial percentage of all African American (40%) undergraduate students. However, students who attend community colleges do not succeed at the same rate as their peers who attend four-year institutions’ (Contreras & Contreras, 2015; Goldrick-Rab, 2010; Melguizo, Keinzl, & Alfonso, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2021), 36% of community college students graduate within 150% of the normal time to complete their program.

Data also suggests that open access at community colleges does not yield equitable outcomes for numerous reasons. For example, community colleges are funded at a much lower rate per student, impacting their ability to provide comprehensive support (Lewis, 2019). Another challenge that the diverse students who attend community colleges face is that faculty and staff do not reflect the communities they serve (Moreno, Smith, Clayton-Pederson, Parker, & Teraguchi, 2006).

The state of California has the largest community college system in the United States with over 116 colleges and 1.8 million students (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2022; Felix & Castro, 2018). California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), an administrative body of the California community college system has a mission to prepare students to transfer to four-year universities, provide workforce development and training, and to provide basic skills and remedial education (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2022). California community colleges reflect a diverse student population with 46% of its students who identify as Hispanic students, 23% White students, 11% Asian, 6% African American, 6% unknown, 4% multi-Ethnicity, 3% Filipino, .4% Pacific Islander, and .4% .4% Native American, and 64% percent of students who are economically disadvantaged (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2022). However, like community college
systems across the country, success rates vary by college. California community colleges also experience inequitable outcomes for racially minoritized students and students who are economically disadvantaged.

As the California community college system works to advance its Vision for Success and agenda focused on student success (measured by completion and transfer), with majority of its student population identifying as racially minoritized and economically disadvantaged (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2022), it is important to identify opportunities or strategies that can help support the work of community colleges to address inequitable outcomes. Figure 1 provides an overview of the current system level California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Vision Goal completion and transfer to four-year institution by race/ethnicity.
The field knows that in studies of two-year institutions of higher education (IHE) that made measurable improvements in student outcomes, one of the five elements attributed to their success was the IHE’s ability to use data effectively. Effective data use to improve outcomes at community colleges is defined as the IHEs ability to use data analytics and technology to conduct

---

Vision Goal Completion is defined as “EITHER among students in selected student journey, the number of students who earned one or more of the following: Chancellor’s Office approved certificate, associate degree, and/or CCC baccalaureate degree, and had an enrollment in the selected year in the district OR among students in selected student journey who earned 12 or more units at any time and at any college up to and including the selected year and who exited the community college system, the number of students who enrolled in any four-year postsecondary institution in the subsequent year” from California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Student Success Metrics Dashboards (2022)
analyses that identify student success indicators and can be used by institutional actors to deploy student success focused interventions (Rajni & Malaya, 2015; US Department of Education, 2016; Wang, 2016).

Within IHEs, at the helm of institutions’ work related to the use of data are Offices of Institutional Research (OIR) which can impact “policy, practices, processes, and planning” (McKinley & Dunnagan, 2021, p. 71) institutional transformation and student success (York et al, 2017). OIR are also one of the critical structures in IHE that are the foundation for institutional transformation and student success (York et al, 2017). OIRs unique role, positioning, connection to an element of practice that research suggests can be attributed to success in improving outcomes, and evidence that suggests inconsistent data use at IHEs alludes to the importance of understanding more about the environments that drive institutional researchers (IR) to support effective data use to address equitable outcomes.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify the factors associated with institutional researchers’ (IR) effective use data to address inequitable outcomes for community college students. Research suggests that institutional actors at IHE do not consistently engage in effective data use (Dowd et al, 2012). The problem I am investigating is IR’s ability to use data to address inequitable outcomes at community colleges in California.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions will be explored in this study.

- What factors (internal and external) influence institutional researchers’ ability to support equitable outcomes?
- Which specific factors (internal and external) influence institutional researchers:
• How does participation in a community of practice focused on equity with other IR influence IR:
  o motivation to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?
  o knowledge of how to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?
  o capacity to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?
**Significance of the Study**

This study is important because following the COVID-19 pandemic, in the California community college system (the largest community college system in the United States) enrollment declined by 300,000 (14%) of students in the 2020-2021 academic year. However, California community colleges are located in cities, counties, and regions that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic with varying shifts in enrollment. While some colleges and community college districts have continued to sustain students with minimal declines in student enrollment, retention, and transfer rates, others have endured the burden and subsequent decline in financial support from sources of funding which are tied to student enrollment.

Specifically, in the Inland Empire (a southern California region comprised of the adjacent San Bernardino and Riverside counties), there are vast differences in enrollment shifts from one community college to another. The data suggests that the decline in enrollment, retention, completion, and transfer are larger for African American and Hispanic/Latino(a) students’ (California Community College Chancellor’s Office, 2022). In the Inland Empire, college degree attainment rates are 12% below the state average of 35% and the national average of 33%. The region has numerous initiatives focused on improving college completion, but it is critical to examine what specific factors may be contributing to equitable outcomes for community college students to support learning and improving outcomes. This study will delve more deeply into the environmental factors at IHE where institutional researchers are working to support equitable outcomes in the Inland Empire region.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community College</td>
<td>Cohen et al (2014) defined community colleges as “any not-for-profit institution regionally accredited toward the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree” (p. 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>In the California Community Colleges system, students are considered economically disadvantaged if they meet any of the following criteria: received a Board of Governor’s Waiver or PELL grant, are a Cal Works or Workforce Investment Act participant, or are a Department of Social Services client. (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Data Mart, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Data Use</td>
<td>The ability to use data analytics and technology to conduct analyses that identify student success indicators and can be used by institutional actors at IHE to deploy student success related interventions (Wang, 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equitable Student Outcomes</td>
<td>Outcomes that are equal across disaggregated student groups (Bensimon, 2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>“Equity refers to achieving parity in student educational outcomes, regardless of race and ethnicity. It moves beyond issues of access and places success outcomes for students of color at center focus” (USC Center for Urban Education, 2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity Minded</td>
<td>Equity-minded includes “being (1) race conscious, (2) institutionally focused, (3) evidence based, (4) systemically aware, and (5) action oriented” (Bensimon and Malcolm 2012; Center for Urban Education, n.d.; Dowd and Bensimon 2015) (p. 6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution of Higher Education</td>
<td>Vocational school, community college, residential college, or university (Kouyoumdjian, 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Institutional Research</td>
<td>Association of Institutional Research (2022) outlines the duties of institutional researcher into four functional areas: need identification, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting; planning, evaluation, and stewards of data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of Institutional Effectiveness</td>
<td>According to the Association for Higher Education Effectiveness (2022), institutional effectiveness is the “integrated functions that support institutional performance, quality, and efficiency.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 2: Literature Review & Frameworks

Review of the Literature

This study seeks to explore the internal and external factors that influence institutional researchers' ability to use data to support equitable student outcomes at California Community colleges in the Inland Empire region. This section describes the literature regarding the following topics: the history of community colleges in the United States and in California, effective data use and data use for equity, an overview of Offices of Institutional Researchers (OIR), and the role Institutional Researchers (IR) in supporting equity on their college campuses. This section also includes a discussion of the conceptual framework for this study and connections to the study research questions.

Community Colleges

To understand the current state of community colleges and the role of institutional researchers who can support equitable outcomes, it is important to examine the history and structure, and evolution of community colleges, America’s “gateway to higher education” (Dowd, 2008, p.1). Baber et al (2019) conducted an analysis of the history of American community colleges from the lens of social justice. In their study, they explored the gradual repositioning of community colleges as centers for the advancement of equity for learners from diverse backgrounds and groups. In the early emergence of community colleges (originally referred to as junior colleges), the focus was on the offering of coursework to support the attainment of an associate degrees and they were intentionally constructed as an extension of secondary education (Baber et al, 2019; Beach, 2012; Boggs & Carter, 1994; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Drummond, 2002; Drury, 2003; Eells, 1931; Fields, 1962; Koos, 1925; Levinson, 2005; Wattenbarger & Witt, 1995).
Later, workforce related demands and a focus on economic development gradually surfaced in community colleges (Dougherty & Townsend, 2006; Brint and Karabel, 1989). These shifts in community colleges were driven by legislation such as the Vocational Education Act in 1963 (Cohen, 2001; Witt et al., 1994) which expanded access and funding, and the Truman Report of 1947 that explicitly noted the role of community colleges in fulfilling America’s expansion of academic opportunities (Gilbert & Heller, 2013; Levinson, 2005; Wattenbarger & Witt, 1995; Witt et al., 1994). By the 1970s, junior colleges began to offer occupational programs, and the term community college was applied to these institutions with dual offerings (Baber et al, 2019; Beach, 2012; Cohen et al., 2014; Drummond, 2002).

Community colleges have since moved beyond dual offerings. Community colleges in the United States provide millions of students access to post-secondary education (American Association of Community Colleges, 2018; Lewis, 2019; Baber et al, 2019). They serve a gateway and gatekeeping function by offering developmental course work, career and technical education, general education coursework for associate degrees and transfer to four-year institution, coursework for English language learners, and non-credit coursework to the nation’s most diverse learners (Dowd, 2008; Bragg, 2001; Dougherty & Townsend, 2006). According to Dowd (2008), community colleges offer “something for everyone” (p. 407) coursework in service of their dual missions to provide access to postsecondary education, support transfer to baccalaureate degree programs, and deliver workforce education (Baber et al, 2019).

As institutions with open admissions policies, community colleges enroll many students who are disproportionately from low-income households, students who are mostly the first generation in their family to attend post-secondary education, and students from racially minoritized groups (Felix & Castro, 2018). With such a substantial portion of their students from groups that have been historically disadvantaged in the public education system (Kao &
Thompson, 2003; Malcom, 2013), community colleges have been given a unique opportunity and challenge to meet the goals of increasing the number of individuals with access to postsecondary education to accommodate the demands of the workforce and economy. However, as college completion goals and accountability focused legislation emerged, the outcomes equity movement has shifted the public community college conversation from access to degree completion and transfer to four-year institutions (Dowd, 2003; Dowd & Tong, 2007; Dowd, 2008).

The level of focus on the critical role that community colleges played in educating the country was elevated during the Obama administration (Baber et al, 2019). Through the introduction of legislation such as the American Recovery and Reemployment Act and funds that were made available to community colleges in the American Graduation Initiative along with many other initiatives during Obama’s administration, community colleges became a focal point in national conversations about post-secondary education (Wood & Harrison, 2014). While this level of attention brought about opportunities for community colleges such as federal funding and investments from philanthropy (Baber et al, 2019), Lester (2014) also notes that the initiatives and legislation also had unintended negative implications for college access and opportunity. As institutions placed their focus on completion, their enrollment patterns trended towards student groups who would be most likely to succeed at their institutions.

A focus on completion and equitable outcomes necessitates a shift in resources policies, and practices. Witham, Malcom-Piqueux, Dowd, and Bensimon (2015) posit that to operationalize equity in postsecondary education, practices that engender inequities through “disproportional representation of gender, race, and ethnic groups, and those of different socioeconomic status regarding entry, progression, completion throughout the higher education experience, and specifically within the community college setting” (Lewis, 2019, p.254).
California Community Colleges

The need and pressure for this shift to a focus on equity and outcomes is felt heavily in the state of California which is home to the largest community college systems in the United States (Felix & Castro, 2018). With 116 colleges strategically placed throughout the state based on geography and a focus on ensuring access to postsecondary education, California’s community college system supports a diverse student population of over 1.8 million throughout the state (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2022).

Table 2.

*Ethnicity of California Community College Students*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STUDENT ETHNICITY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Ethnicity</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Students who identified as Native American accounted for less than 1% of students.
According to the Public Policy Institute of California (2019), California community colleges have numerous systemic reform efforts to address the inequitable outcomes and completion rates of its students. In 2016, several California community colleges began implementing Guided Pathways, a program focused on shifting institutional policies and practices to support students on degree or major pathways to increase completion and transfer. In 2017, Assembly Bill 705 (AB 705) required community colleges to implement assessment and placement procedures along with coursework that allow students to complete developmental coursework within one academic year. California community colleges also implemented the Associates Degree for Transfer (ADT) which guarantees admission to California State University colleges in their community college course of study.

California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office advanced a Vision for Success that was adopted by the California Community College Board of Governors in 2017. The Vision for Success (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2022) included numerous goals in Table 3.

Table 3.

*Overview of California Community College Chancellor’s Office Vision for Success Goals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>California Community Colleges Vision for Success Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increase</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase completion of degrees, credentials, certificates, and job-specific skill sets by 20% between 2017 and 2022.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase transfers to UC and CSU by 35% between 2017 and 2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase the number of exiting CTE students employed in their field of study to 76% by 2022.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2021, p.6)

In 2021, the Chancellor’s Office affirmed its ongoing commitment to accomplishing the goals included in the Vision for Success. Figure 2 presents the percentages of students who have achieved the Vision for Success completion goals or transfer to a four-year institution for students who were pursuing a degree or transfer in 2019-2021 by race/ethnicity statewide and by two adjacent macro regions (Los Angeles/Orange County and Inland Empire/Desert region). This chart illustrates the inequitable outcomes statewide and within two of the southern California macro regions with the lowest rates overall in the Inland Empire-Desert Macro Region.
Figure 2.

The Percentage of California Community College Students Statewide, Inland Empire/Desert, and Los Angeles/Orange County Macro Region Who Attained the Vision for Success\(^2\) Definition of Completion in 2019-2021 or Enrolled in a Four-Year institution in the Subsequent Year by Race/Ethnicity

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\(^2\) Vision Goal Completion is defined as “EITHER among students in selected student journey, the number of students who earned one or more of the following: Chancellor’s Office approved certificate, associate degree, and/or CCC baccalaureate degree, and had an enrollment in the selected year in the district.

OR among students in selected student journey who earned 12 or more units at any time and at any college up to and including the selected year and who exited the community college system, the number of students who enrolled in any four-year postsecondary institution in the subsequent year” from California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Student Success Metrics Dashboards (2022)
In 2023, the CCCC O launched the Vision 2030 with a continued commitment to equity in success, access, and support through “Equitable Baccalaureate Attainment, Workforce and Economic development, Generative AI and the Future of Learning” (California Community Colleges Chancellors Office, 2023). They are currently in the process of gathering community input on the Vision 2030 Roadmap for California Community Colleges. What remains consistent in the renewed vision is an emphasis on equity and deepening their efforts to support the students served by the system.

Community College Leadership

According to Rodriguez (2015) community college presidents play a critical role advancing conversations on equity by facilitating courageous difficult conversations and supporting equitable outcomes because they set the tone for their institution. There also need for college presidents to exemplify the mission, culture, and demographics of colleges they lead (Rodriguez, 2015). A list of the qualities that college presidents need was developed by The Aspen Institute and Achieving the Dream (2014) and included in a report (See Table 4).

Table 4.

Attributes of College Presidents (Achieving the Dream, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>deep commitment to student access and success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>willingness to take significant risks to advance student success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>an ability to create lasting change within the college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a broad strategic vision for the college and its students, reflected in external partnerships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the ability to raise and allocate resources in ways aligned with student success

In addition to these attributes listed by Aspen Institute and Achieving the Dream (2014), Rodriguez (2015) also states that to sustain equity for students, there must also be intentional alignment supported by not only a cross-section of the college but also the college’s governing board with the president serving as the champion of this work.

Data Use for Equity

While there are numerous definitions of data, in the context of higher education, data is defined as statistics, facts, and lived experiences with students and institutional actors at IHEs that can be synthesized and used to support continuous improvement practices (Mandinach and Schildkamp, 2021). In the current climate of accountability, data-driven decision making, and the use of key performance metrics to examine institutional performance to examine critical questions, data and data use have surfaced as an essential component of higher education (Ivie, 2019). However, in higher education, highly selective and private institutions have been better positioned to engage in the effective use of data (Dowd et al, 2012; Dougherty, 2002; Dowd & Tong, 2007; Erisman & Gao, 2006). This does not reflect limitations in the capacity of individuals working in open access institutions. On the contrary, open access institutions are faced with the limitations of human resources to engage in effective data use (Dowd et al, 2012).

In the literature, effective data use that has supported improved outcomes at community colleges has been described as the ability to use data analytics and technology to conduct analyses that identify student success indicators and can be used by institutional actors at IHE to deploy student success related interventions (Rajni & Malaya, 2015; US Department of
Education, 2016; Wang, 2016). To support the effective use of data in practice, there has been a movement to enhance community college leaders understanding and reticence to use assessment to identify equity gaps (Baber et al 2019, Dowd, 2007; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2017). Scholars also offer a process whereby practitioners examine their institutional performance through a critical lens while centering equity throughout the process. Research suggests numerous data collection strategies focused on data disaggregation and data interrogation while also being mindful of the importance of addressing the inclination to impose assimilation focused strategies as a precipitating factor for student success (Baber, 2019; Lewis, 2019). The offices that support the college in the collection of data for their equity work are Offices of Institutional Research and/or Offices of Institutional Effectiveness.

**Offices of Institutional Research & Institutional Effectiveness**

Over fifty years ago, the field of institutional research emerged (Swing & Ross, 2016). Most community colleges have offices of Institutional Research (OIR) or Institutional Effectiveness (IE) (Manning, 2011). OIR and IE vary in their structural placement within the IHE, but they have a common purpose to collect, interpret, and share data across the campus (Saupe, 1990; Abrica & Rivas, 2017; Felix, Ceballos, & Salazar, 2015). According to the Association for Higher Education Effectiveness (2022), institutional effectiveness is the “integrated functions that support institutional performance, quality, and efficiency.” IE is an institution-wide effort which includes the assessment of student learning outcomes across multiple departments and is closely tied with accreditation. In some instances, they report directly to college presidents or chief academic officers (Manning, 2011).

Many OIR are situated within IE and are involved in strategic planning and institutional evaluation to “improve performance, quality, and efficiency” (Ivie, 2019, p. 202). OIR offices have a complex translational and educational role for their institutions (Ivie, 2019).
Association of Institutional Research (2022) outlines the duties of institutional researcher into four functional areas: need identification, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting; planning, evaluation, and stewards of data. Within their offices, the research suggests that institutional researchers serve as “infomediaries” (Dowd et al, 2012; Milam, 2005), teachers (Bagshaw, 1999), and recent literature illuminate the role of social justice advocates (Hernández, Berumen, Zerquera, 2018).

McArthur (2016) posits that Offices of Institutional Research (OIR) are also critical in addressing and closing equity gaps. However, according to Abrica and Rivas (2017), IR offices operate in race neutral ways that play a role in the reinforcement of structural inequity at IHE. This has been reinforced by accountability and reporting frameworks which have not historically required OIR and OIE to report data in ways that reflect their inequitable student outcomes (Abrica, 2017; Bensimon 2007). In a qualitative study of the experiences of Chicana Institutional Researchers, Abrica, and Rivas (2017) stated that “Equity and advocacy for racial minority students are not routinely part of IR work.” (p.44) Scholars have intimated a shift in the field towards OIR explicitly working to address inequity in ways that center student needs and the students who are most disproportionately impacted (Hernandez, 2018).

**Institutional Researchers**

According to Manning (2011), both IE and OIR staff are in a position where they must drive action by motivating individuals who do not report to them with no tangible reward for their engagement. Ivie (2019) suggests that institutional researchers go beyond their traditional roles and endeavor to explore critical questions with findings that may not reflect positively on the institution and individuals they serve. This is aligned with the IR Code of Ethics and Professional Practice (AIR, 2017) position that “data and results should be approached with objectivity and unbiased attitudes, and free from conflicts of interest.” However, as employees of
the institutions they serve, is it possible for them to be free of conflicts of interest and unbiased attitudes? When surveyed, IR lacked an understanding of concepts associated with equity, power, and privilege (Zequera et al, 2018; Felix et al, 2022).

**Institutional Researchers in Community Colleges**

Research focused on the role of Institutional Research of advancing equity in community colleges suggests opportunities to improve to advance equity (Felix & Ceballos, 2022). In a qualitative study focused on examining the role of offices of Institutional Research in promoting equity and addressing the challenges encountered by racially minoritized students in California Community Colleges, Felix, and Ceballos (2022) found that only 24% of colleges mentioned equity when they articulated their office’s role and function in their mission statements. In their discursive analysis of community college mission statements, they noted the need for institutional researchers to move to collaboration that identifies root causes of inequity and develop strategies that are equity minded and student success focused.

**Implications of Equity Work**

While the previously stated research suggests that IR need play a pivotal role in supporting equitable outcomes, there are consequences of engaging in “racialized equity labor” which addresses race-based inequality and marginalization (Lerma, Hamilton, and Nielsen, 2021). While this term most often is used in reference to people of color engaging in this work, it is also applied to White allies who may also experience a lack of compensation for their additional efforts or under compensation. In some instances, the reward for racialized equity labor in some institutions may be punishment. While some institutions have individuals in roles with a sole focus on equity and diversity and those individuals are paid for their focus on diversity (Ahmed, 2012), people of color serving in faculty and staff roles are also expected
more often to engage in equity work and experience higher expectations of service commitment than their peers (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2011).

**Synthesis and Critique of the Findings Organized by Themes**

  Overall, the research suggests that community colleges are evolving institutions that are critical for ensuring access to post-secondary education with complex multifaceted missions and dual purposes (American Association of Community Colleges, 2018; Lewis, 2019; Baber et al, 2019; Dowd, 2008). However, the research also suggests that supporting equitable outcomes and student completion of their post-secondary goals in community colleges is an area with room for improvement (Dowd et al, 2012; Dougherty, 2002; Dowd & Tong, 2007; Erisman & Gao, 2006). In California community colleges, where there is the largest and most diverse student body in the country, there is a need for improvement and the system has endeavored to deploy multiple systemic reform efforts with ambitious goals (California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, 2022). To accomplish their goals, institutions will need a strong capacity to analyze and effectively use data and offices of institutional research are ideally positioned to support the work, but they face numerous challenges. Aside from the stated needs for shifts in organizational missions and IR offices perceived roles and functions, scholars have also noted the needed for institutional researchers to become equity minded practitioners, infomediaries, educators, facilitators, change agents, and social justice advocates (Ivie, 2019; Hernández, Berumen, Zerquera, 2018; Dowd et al, 2012; Swing, 2009; Milam, 2005).

**Identification of the Empirical Study Gap**

  There is currently a growing body of literature on the ways that the field of institutional research and institutional researchers should evolve. Abrica and Rivas (2017) suggest that the literature reflects interests in the role of policy shifts and accountability on the positioning of institutional researchers in organizational structures or the specific activities expected of
institutional researchers but lacks a dearth of research on the ways that community colleges specifically uphold their mission to support equity for specific marginalized student groups. Felix et al. (2021) critically examined California community college mission statements across the community college system for the function and purpose of their IR offices to identify the presence of discourse on race and equity and found that 86% of mission statements omitted the topic of equity. Based on their findings, Felix et al. (2021) suggests that IR offices adjust their missions and move towards meaningful engagement, cross campus collaboration, root cause identification, and the use of strategies rooted in equity mindedness to improve student outcomes. The findings and recommendations elucidated by Felix et al. (2021) require changes at the institution and department level as well as a shift in mindset and practice that requires different capacities in institutional researchers.

In some instances, the practice of institutional research in alignment with existing ideas in the field of neutrality and data stewardship conflicts with the work required to advance student equity. Abrica and Rivas (2017) in their qualitative study of Chicana community college institutional researchers at a single California community college district, posit that the lack of critical engagement with data and insinuation of IR objectivity or neutrality in results of analysis makes institutional researchers complicit in perpetuating the inequities they seek to address. Abrica and Rivas (2017) suggest that the field should critically assess the knowledge, training, and capacities of institutional researchers to support equity.

Ultimately, scholars have asserted that institutions and institutional researchers need to shift, but the literature does not address the complex intersection of simultaneously shifting a system, college, and practitioner’s practice in support of equity. The California community college system, one of the largest community college systems in the country, has multiple simultaneous reform efforts focused on student equity and improving outcomes. Colleges,
districts, and institutional actors within this system are also shifting to support equity in response to system, district, and college level goals to support equity. This study seeks to address the gap in the literature related to the intersection of multiple levels of education to support equity with a focus on the institutional researcher’s experience and perception of the factors in their environment that impact their ability to support equitable outcomes at southern California community colleges. This region was selected because there are currently multiple projects in the region focused on increasing the capacity of institutional researchers to support work at their colleges related to student equity plans and meeting college equity goals. This region also has equity gaps between student racial/ethnicity groups that colleges are working to address in their students. Since the literature suggests the need for increased capacity among institutional researchers and mission shifts to change the way that institutional researchers do their work, and this is a region where it is already happening, this qualitative study will examine the experience of institutional researchers in multiple districts and colleges and the factors in their environments that must shift to use of data to support equitable completion (6-year graduation) and transfer rates. This study seeks to develop findings to help college leadership and systems understand more about how institutions can better support institutional researchers.

**Conceptual Framework**

**Overview and Underlining Assumptions of the Frameworks**

The conceptual framework for this study is designed to examine the specific behaviors of the IR within the context of their environment, the factors which influence their environment, the dimensions of the work environment, and the power structures which drive that environment.

**Ford’s Living Systems Framework**

Ford’s Living System’s Framework (Ford, 1987) will be used to examine the factors in the IR work environment that affect their complex internal systems that institutional researchers
use to execute the steps necessary to attain their goals of supporting the use of data to support equitable student outcomes. In the Ford Living Systems Framework (LSF) (Ford, 1987), the individual person is presented as a complex system of internal systems (physiological, biological, cognitive, and psychological systems) operating within an environment and engaging in their own goal directed behaviors. As we apply this framework to higher education, within this framework, individuals (institutional researchers) have agency and work to achieve their goals and aspirations in their work. Institutional researchers can attain their goals and aspirations (to achieve equitable outcomes) if they have the motivation, capacity, and environment which supports their work. In this study, we are examining the factors in the environment in which they work that affect the ability of their complex internal systems to execute the steps necessary to attain their goals of supporting the use of data to support community college student outcomes.

**Equity Minded Practitioners**

To better understand intuitional researchers’ use of data to support equitable outcomes, it is also helpful to understand the principles and practices of equity mindedness. Lewis (2019) and Wiltham et al (2015) operationally define equity-mindedness as:

...taking stock of the contradictions between the ideas of democratic education and the social, institutional, and individual practices that contribute to persistent inequities in college outcomes among different racial and ethnic groups and socio-economic classes. Equity-minded individuals are aware of the sociohistorical context of exclusionary practices and racism in higher education and the effect of power asymmetries on opportunities and outcomes for students of color and students of low socioeconomic status. Being equity minded thus involves being conscious of the ways that higher education through its practices, policies, expectations, and unspoken rules places responsibility for student success on the very groups that have experienced
marginalization, rather than on the individuals and institutions whose responsibility it is to remedy the marginalization.” (pp. 254-255)

Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon (2015) further operationalize equity minded practitioners when they stated that their research with hundreds of institutions suggests that equity-minded includes “being (1) race conscious, (2) institutionally focused, (3) evidence based, (4) systemically aware, and (5) action oriented” (Bensimon and Malcom, 2012; Center for Urban Education, n.d.; Dowd and Bensimon 2015) (p. 6). They further elaborated on the following principles of equity-mindedness.

Table 5.

*Principles and Practices of Equity Minded Practitioners*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Principles &amp; Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equity-Minded</strong></td>
<td>• Reflect an Awareness of and Responsiveness to the Systemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practitioners,</strong></td>
<td>Nature of Racial/Ethnic Inequities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practices, and</strong></td>
<td>• Are Race-Conscious in an Affirmative Sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Equity-Minded</strong></td>
<td>• View Inequities as Problems of Practice and Feel a Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practitioners</strong></td>
<td>and Institutional Responsibility to Address Them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Rely on Evidence to Guide their Practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Take Action to Eliminate Educational Inequities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Based on *Principles of Equity Mindedness* (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon 2017, pp. 6-8)

While only three of the principles are focused on the individual practitioner, institutional researchers serve in a role and function that is heavily influenced by the campus and system they serve. Since community colleges are also heavily susceptible to outside influences, the
conceptual framework for this study must account for the larger system in which they are operating and will include each of the five principles of equity mindedness in examining the factors which impact institutional researchers use of data to support equitable outcomes.

**Framework for Diversity**

Smith’s (2020) framework for diversity accounts for the global and local context for diversity that IR professionals are navigating in their roles as thought partners and educators in institutions. The framework for diversity includes four dimensions at the level of the institution and can be used to help the institution evaluate its own diversity efforts. The dimensions where diversity should be embedded and reflected include access and success of underrepresented student populations, campus climate and intergroup relations, education and scholarship, and institutional viability and vitality (Smith, 2020). Figure 3 is a visual display of Smith’s (2020) diversity framework, the mission which is at the core of an institution's diversity work is centered in the framework.
Figure 3.

Overview of Smith’s (2020) Framework for Diversity

A Framework for Diversity (Smith 2020, p. 104).

Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner’s (1993) ecological systems theory (EST) is human development theory which examines the factors within the levels of ecological structures. EST provides a structure to examine educational environments and factors which influence them (Tahir, Doelger, & Hynes, 2019; Anderson, Boyle, & Deppler, 2014). It also provides a wider lens to examine the highly nuances organizational behaviors which disadvantage students from racially minoritized groups in higher education (Johnson, 2022). Within EST, there are four levels of systems: microsystem, mesosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Mendoza, Malcom, and Parish (2015) used Renn & Arnold’s analysis (2003) of EST’s application of each level of system to environments on college campuses.
This study seeks to apply this model adaptation to community colleges in California included in a larger 116 California Community Colleges system. Therefore, while some levels will be defined similarly to Mendoza, Malcom, and Parish (2015), others are expanded to include the larger swath of environments that must be accounted for in community colleges in California. The microsystem in education refers to the setting where the individual (in this instance, Institutional Researchers) engages in face-to-face interactions. The microsystem is inclusive of the factors in the immediate environment of the institutional researcher including the OIR or OIE. The mesosystem accounts for the interconnected or linked interactions in their environment. In this instance, the mesosystem would include the college campus or district where the OIR would connect with other offices through their assessment and evaluative work. The exosystem refers to the level of the environment where individuals or institutional researchers do not play an explicit role, but the various institutional actors and students are impacted. In this study, the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office and system which enacts policies, initiatives, and other administrative functions are in the exosystem of Institutional Researchers. The macrosystem is inclusive of the larger social and cultural context which also exerts influence over beliefs, attitudes, and the system. For example, beliefs or ideas about the role of community colleges in supporting workforce development or providing access to postsecondary education. The final system level is the chronosystem which reflects the events that occur in an individual’s lifetime and historical evenings. Examples of events in the chronosystem the COVID 19 pandemic (Guy-Evans, 2020), social movements, and trends that can be observed in popular culture.

Berger’s Five Dimensions of Organizational Structures

Berger’s (2000) five dimensions of educational organization behavior will also be used to frame and identify environmental factors, structures, and pressures within and outside of the IHE
where IR work. Berger (2002) developed an integrated model with five core dimensions of organizational behavior at colleges which include bureaucratic, collegial, political, symbolic, and systemic areas. The bureaucratic dimension examines the coherence in the processes for making decisions in the institution. This dimension is inclusive of the formality and structures associated with the college’s hierarchy, rules, and policies. The collegial dimension accounts for collaboration and engagement, the experiences of people, and the way that multiple perspectives are included in decision making processes. Since colleges have finite resources, the political dimension encapsulates the various interests at competition for the resources in the organization. Higher education is a system with numerous symbols and traditions that hold meaning and account for the symbolic dimension. California community colleges are a part of a larger system and communities which impacts their policies and practices. The systemic dimension accounts for the way that community colleges are a part of the larger complex organization with parts that are interrelated and that connect with the larger environment in different ways.

**Summary and Application to Research Questions**

This study seeks to address the gap in the literature related to the complex intersection of shifting a system, colleges, and practitioners with a focus on the institutional researcher’s experience and perception of the factors in their environment that impact their ability to support equitable outcomes at southern California community colleges. While it is complex to include multiple frameworks, it was necessary to include each because they account for the nuances of the complex environments where institutional researchers are working and will account for the various themes that may emerge in data analysis. The frameworks intersect with one another in the microsystem and mesosystem as is shown in Figure 4.
The conceptual framework for this study integrates elements from existing frameworks that address various aspects of the internal and external environment of Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) where institutional researchers (IR) work. Each of the frameworks described provide a lens to view the institutional researcher (Living Systems Framework, Equity Minded Practitioners', and Ecological Systems Theory-microsystem), and the college, district, or system (Berger’s Organizational Dimensions, Ecological Systems Theory, and Smith’s Framework for Diversity).

**Application of Framework to Research Question #1**

R1. What factors (internal and external) influence institutional researchers’ ability to support equitable outcomes?
Bronfenbrenner’s (1993) ecological system’s theory provides a lens for examining the institutional researcher within their office and role (micro system), the larger campus community and office they interact with daily (mesosystem), the overarching system (exosystem) which impacts policy and funding, our larger society and culture which influence post-secondary education and outcomes (macrosystem), and the events which occur in our society (chronosystem). Situated within the mesosystem are Berger’s (2002) five dimensions of organizational structures in education and Smith’s (2020) framework for diversity that account for the inner workings of institutions and provide a lens for examining closely how those areas impact an IHE’s ability to achieve equitable student outcomes. Each of these elements of the framework are aligned with the literature which suggests that institutions supporting equity must make complex shifts that are driven by complex external environments and internal practices. These pieces of the framework are addressed in research question 1 of the study.

**Application of Framework to Research Question # 2 & 3**

R2. Which specific factors (internal and external) influence institutional researchers:

- motivation to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?
- capacity to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?

R3. How does participation in a community of practice focused on equity with other IR influence IR:

- motivation to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?
- knowledge of how to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?
- capacity to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?
Within the microsystem of the institutional researcher is Malcom-Piquex and Bensimon’s (2015) policies and practices of equity minded practitioners. This framework provides an overview of specific behaviors and mindsets that can be observed in institutional researchers who support equitable outcomes. Ford’s Living Systems Framework (1987) which asserts that human behavior is a function of an individual’s motivation, capacity, and environment can be used to further delineate how the factors at the level of the individual institutional researcher, contribute to their work that support the larger institutions achievement of equity goals. Given the focus in the literature on the need for institutional researcher capacity building, these two aspects of the framework can help with understanding more about the experiences of institutional researchers who are currently engaged in the regional capacity building efforts and the aspects of their environment that are supporting their growth which will be explored under research question 2 & 3.
Chapter 3: Methodology

This section includes a description of the methodologies that were used in this study which focused on the environmental factors that impact institutional researchers’ ability to use data to support equitable student outcomes. Specific areas explored in this section include the qualitative case study design, sampling plan, a description of study participants, and the qualitative protocol with interview questions aligned with the study research questions. Proposed plans for data collection, the protection of human subjects, analysis of the interview data, study limitations, and role the researcher’s positionality in data collection and analysis are also presented in this section.

Restatement of Research Questions

1. What factors (internal and external) impact institutional researchers’ ability to support equitable outcomes?
2. Which specific factors (internal and external) impact institutional researchers:
   a. motivation to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?
   b. capacity to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?
3. How does participation in a community of practice focused on equity with other IR impact IR:
   a. motivation to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?
   b. knowledge of how to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?
   c. capacity to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?

Research Design

This qualitative case study examined institutional researchers’ experiences engaging in their role at their institution and their perceptions of the factors that have contributed to or inhibited their ability to support equity.
A qualitative case study design was selected because it presents an opportunity to delve into the highly nuanced contexts and environments where institutional researchers are working. A qualitative study also allowed the researcher to understand more about the context and experiences of each institutional researcher which may be impacting their ability to support the college or district with attaining equitable outcomes. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the semi-structured interview approach to qualitative investigation creates a space for researchers to be responsive and for innovative ideas to emerge. Therefore, this study used semi-structured interviews to collect data from institutional researchers. The protocol for the semi-structured interviews for the present study were developed based on the identified research questions and are connected to the Berger’s Five Dimensions of Organizational Structures (Berger, 2000), Bronfenbrenner Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1993; Anderson, Boyle, and Deppler, 2014), Equity Minded Practitioners (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2017), Ford’s Living Systems Framework (Ford, 1987), Framework for Diversity (Smith, 2020) from the conceptual framework. In accordance with Merriam & Tisdell (2016), a pilot interview was conducted to identify any questions that may be potentially problematic, repetitive, or in need of revision. However, most of the questions from the protocol remained intact (see Appendix B).

**Positionality Statement**

As a cisgender Black woman who is also a first-generation college student, I understand firsthand how challenging it can be to navigate post-secondary education. I attended a California community college to take an additional course during winter session to ensure that I could graduate on time (at that time, four-year graduation was a reasonable expectation). This brief experience helped me to understand more about the challenges students encounter with
navigating a new campus, but it also dispelled myths or stereotypes I believed about community colleges and community college students.

When I worked as a higher education administrator, I was responsible for numerous student success focused programs and a public four year- Hispanic serving institution. During that time, I worked closely with institutional researchers who helped our team understand where there were equity gaps, and they helped our team closely monitor our progress. Based on our collaborative work, we presented at national conferences and have our work shared in publications. This experience has shaped my perception of the critical role that institutional researchers can play in student success. In my current role, I serve as an external evaluator for one of the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office reform efforts. My previous work with institutional researchers and current learning experiences with community colleges have shaped my deep respect for the work they do and the complex issues they must navigate to perform their role. Given my background, during the data collection process, I engaged in critical dialogue with colleagues as I approached the data collection and analysis process. I worked to ensure that I closely monitored my personal bias in the interpretation of what institutional researchers shared during their respective interviews. During the data collection and analysis process, I was mindful that it was possible that some people were less descriptive about their experiences or perspective based on my researcher's positionality. It is possible that my positionality may have also increased the level of comfort of some interview participants who decided to speak openly about their experiences with discrimination, racism, and resistance at their colleges.

Sampling Frame and Description of Participants

Participants for this study were to include institutional researchers at California Community Colleges. Institutional researchers were defined as full-time staff employed in an
Office of Institutional Research or Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Given the size of this population and the need to easily select and recruit potential participants for this study, a snowball sampling methodology will be used to recruit 22 full-time institutional researchers for the semi-structured Zoom interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).
Measures & Sources Description

Data in this study was derived from semi-structured, open-ended interviews with institutional researchers from California Community colleges in the Southern California Region. The questions for the interview were mapped to specific research questions and include language that is aligned with the conceptual framework of this study (See Table 7). The 60–90-minute interviews were designed to be conducted in the Spring 2023 semester.

Interview Protocol

The study interview protocol was refined based on feedback solicited from a community college system leader who oversees institutional researchers and a California community college institutional researcher. The interview protocol was also piloted with a former institutional researcher. Interview data were to be collected by the Ph.D. student conducting the study. Interviews were recorded via Zoom with preliminary software transcription through Otter.ai and then subsequent review for accuracy by the Ph.D. student.
Table 6.

Alignment of Study Research Questions & Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Interview Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>R1. What factors (internal and external) influence institutional researchers’ ability to support equitable outcomes?</strong></td>
<td>1. Describe the ways that equity is reflected in the mission statement of your office and/or institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. What recommendations for shifts or adjustments would you make to the mission statement in support of equity?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. How does the system and district focus on equity impact your work as an institutional researcher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. In what ways have the system/district supported your equity work?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. What barriers to your equity work would you like to see the system or district office address? How?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c. Are there any system level policies or practices that have impacted your equity work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. How has the pandemic and other events in your community impacted your equity work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. How would you describe your experiences in working with offices across campus to support equitable student outcomes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Where have you experienced progress?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. What challenges have you encountered? How are you overcoming them?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
R2. Which specific factors (internal and external) influence institutional researchers:

- Motivation to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?
- Capacity to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?

R3. How does participation in a community of practice focused on equity with other IR influence IR:

- Motivation to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?
- Knowledge of how to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?

5. How would you describe your personal journey towards supporting equitable outcomes in your role as an institutional researcher?
   a. What lessons have you learned on your journey towards using data to support equitable student outcomes?

6. Where would you like to grow in your personal equity journey?
   a. What support or learning opportunities are currently available to you?
   b. What aspects of the learning opportunities have been most helpful?
   c. What changes would you make to the professional learning opportunities you have participated in for institutional researchers who are supporting equity?

7. What specific practices do you engage in to advance your equity work?
   a. How did you learn about the practices you use?
   b. How do you sustain your motivation to continue to work to support equity for students?

8. Please share any other items related to your equity work that have not been addressed.
support equitable outcomes?

- Capacity to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?

Demographic Survey

Interview participants were also invited to complete a brief online demographic survey prior to their interview through a Qualtrics link. The online demographic survey was available for participants after they consented to study participation. The demographic survey included items regarding each interview participant’s current department name, title, length of time in their role, race, and gender that will be used to generate descriptive statistics about study participants.

Data Collection Procedures

During the recruitment phase, participants were recruited via email by an institutional researcher who currently leads a regional project focused on institutional researchers and equity. It was also shared by the PhD student based on referrals provided by institutional researchers who replied to the email stating their interest in participation and various listings of institutional researchers. The email invitation (See Appendix B) described that institutional researchers were being recruited to participate in the study, the purpose of the study, and that if selected, they would be asked to participate in a 60–90-minute audio recorded interview.
Potential participants were notified that the interview would include questions related to their experiences with engaging in their role as an institutional researcher at their institution and their perceptions of the factors that have contributed to or inhibited their ability to support equity. Participants were informed that all responses will be completely confidential and were permitted to book their own interview using the Calendly scheduling software. Upon completion of the scheduling process, participants also received an invitation to complete the online consent form which described potential risks, benefits, compensation, and the voluntary nature of their participation. They were also invited to complete a brief demographic survey to provide the researcher with their background information prior to the interview.

During the data collection phase, participants completed the audio recorded interviews for 60-90 minutes, and received a $50 amazon gift card for their participation within 24 hours after the interview.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

This researcher applied and received approval from the Claremont Graduate University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct this study with institutional researchers from California Community Colleges. The application submitted to the IRB included an overview of study participants, proposed methods, recruitment email, interview protocols, and plans for the protection of human subjects participating in this study. It should be noted that participation in this study presented minimal risk to participants. However, all participants were informed that the researcher was investigating their experiences with engaging in their role as an institutional researcher at their institution and their perceptions of the factors that have contributed to or inhibited their ability to support equity. All participants were informed in writing prior to their interview about any potential risks associated with participation, before and during the interview.
in writing and verbally, that their participation is completely voluntary. In addition, participants were informed that their personal identifying information and any information they share in the interview will remain confidential. Approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board at Claremont Graduate University for all consent forms.

Analysis Approach

The interviews for this study were all conducted online through Zoom. Each interview was transcribed using Otter.ai transcription software that offers encrypted submission and time limited storage of transcription data. Then each transcript generated by the software was reviewed alongside the recording by the researcher to verify accuracy of the data.

During the data collection phase, codes and subcategories for the data analysis were developed based on the conceptual framework. Once the interview transcripts from this study were loaded into Dedoose the PhD student used a priori coding process with the established categories/codes based on the conceptual framework. Then an inductive coding process was used to identify additional categories and sub-categories that emerged. Once the data coding process in the analysis software was complete, the researcher exported the codes and excerpts for an axial coding process to identify any relationships between the categories and subcategories. The findings derived from the data were used to develop the dissertation report findings included in Chapter 4. The quantitative data collected through the demographic survey were cleaned and analyzed to provide descriptive statistics regarding participants and will be included in Chapter 4.
Figure 5.

*Data Collection and Analysis Roadmap*

- **Outreach & Recruitment**
  - Potential Participants who are interested submit their appointment and receive link to Informed consent & demographic survey

- **Data Collection**
  - Participants complete the demographic survey in Qualtrics and engage in the 60-90 minute interview.

- **Data Analysis**
  - Demographic data used to develop descriptive statistics
  - Qualitative data analyzed using deductive codes and inductive codes
Chapter 4: Study Findings

This chapter includes an overview of the results of sampling procedures including a description of participants, a discussion of reliability and validity, and the key findings with supporting evidence based on analysis of the data. Each theme from the findings is aligned with the appropriate research question and will be discussed in relation to the conceptual framework in Chapter 5.

Sampling Procedure Results

After the initial outreach email, a snowball sampling methodology was used to recruit participants to participate in the study. The researcher also sent outreach emails to potential participants at least twice. The researcher also presented an overview of the study, risks, and benefits of participation to an online group of institutional researchers to increase response rates. While the initial goal was 30, there were twenty-two individuals that scheduled interviews and twenty-one individuals completed interviews between April and July 2023. Most interview participants (85.7%) completed the demographic survey. When asked about their race, 38.9% selected Hispanic/Latino (n=7), 33.3% selected White (n=6), 16.6% selected Black or African American (n=3), and 11.1% selected Asian (n=2). There was an equal number of people who identified as man (n=9) or woman (n=9) who responded to the survey.

This study intended to include institutional researchers who are employed full time at California community colleges. Interview participants held positions which varied from classified professionals to administrators with titles that included analysts (n=4), senior analysts (n=2), directors (n=4), and deans (n=4). The amount of time interview participants has been in their current role also varied with 27.8% reporting that they have served in their current role less than one year (n=5), 3-5 years (n=5), 6+years (n=5), and 16.7% who have been in their role 1-2
years. Most interview participants (38.9%) worked in departments with names that included Institutional Research & Institutional Effectiveness (n=7). However, there were also participants from departments of Offices of Institutional Effectiveness (n=5) or Institutional Research (n=3). However, there were also three interview participants who no longer currently work in an office of institutional research or institutional effectiveness at a California community college. These individuals were referred to the study through outreach and expressed an interest in participating in spite of their current role change. A description of study participants can be found in Table 6.

Table 7.

**Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your race?</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Time in Current Role**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Valid %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than one year</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The findings presented in this chapter reflect themes related to each of the study research questions. The evidence presented is linked to a participant identification number that was assigned to each participant along with their title and whether they identified as White or as a Person of Color (POC) (Asian, Black, Hispanic/Latino). The decision to group all races that were not White into the Person of Color category was made because there is a small number of IR in the state who identify as POC. Given the sample size and the use of title to identify participants, the researcher determined that grouping all POC into one category would protect the anonymity of participants. Also, there is a small number of IR who serve in the role of Senior Researcher/Analyst in IR offices in the region and there were only two in this sample. Therefore,
the researcher decided to list Senior Researchers/Analysts as administrators to protect their identity and align them with the category that most reflected their responsibilities related to executing the IR office activities in support of equity across the college.

**Reliability and Validity Results**

This study included interviews with Institutional Researchers in the California Community College system. To address validity, the interview protocol questions were developed based on studies related to the topic of equity at community colleges and included literature derived from research conducted within the California community college system (insert references to Felix and one other here) and with institutional researchers in the state. To further increase the validity of the study, the interview protocol was reviewed by a California Community college system leader and an institutional researcher. To address reliability of the findings, after the researcher engaged in axial coding and identified themes, the researcher’s chair reviewed a minimum of three compelling pieces of evidence to support each theme that is included in the study findings.

To support increased trustworthiness of the data collected in this study, the researcher engaged in bracketing. For example, the researcher has experience working in public higher education, has worked extensively with institutional researchers with a focus on equity, and has experience working with colleagues in the California community college system. The process of acknowledging these aspects of the researcher's previous experience that may contribute to biases creates the opportunity to set them aside (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher also engaged in reflexivity during the coding and analysis process which included self-questioning about whether themes are aligned with what participants have shared rather than confirming their own biases (Goldblatt & Band-Winterstein, 2016; Probst, 2015).
Findings for Research Question # 1

What factors (internal and external) influence institutional researchers’ ability to support equitable outcomes?

Theme 1 Shifting Organizations

The first research question in this study examines the environmental factors or influences that impact IR ability to support equitable outcomes. Through analysis of the institutional researcher interview data, there were specific recommendations made by IR regarding how they would like to shift their institutions or offices mission towards shared investment and accountability with explicit language about their equity work. Participant #4, an administrator who identified as White, shared that he believes it begins with wanting the “mission statement to have a genuine feel that we come when we come to a consensus. It feels like it's reflected. I don't have a sense, whether it does that right now.” Another IR spoke about their desire to have the mission convey to college stakeholders that driving equity work is not only about the people who manage the data, and that it is the responsibility of everyone. Participant #7 shared:

“So, I think, again, communicate to stakeholders on the campus. That data isn't the only person you go to for data. Everybody in the office has that responsibility because equity is something that is our business, it doesn't just live with. It makes a lot of sense.”

–Participant #7, Research Analyst, Person of Color

Participant #1 elucidated how she believes the data is being used and ways the mission statement could potentially support accountability when they shared:

I think people probably pick and choose what domain they want and then use that to build their own agenda. And so, like how I would like something about accountability or something about like maybe like a feedback loop of like, okay, I'm providing you with this
information like what are you doing with that? And then show me that you did what you said you were going to do. I think that's probably too much for our mission statement, but it would be nice.

-Participant #1, Research Analyst, White

As institutional researchers delved more deeply into the organizational shifts they would like to see reflected in their missions, they shared their specific recommendations about the language related to their equity work. For example, Participant #18 shared:

we're going to rewrite it to talk more about student equity. But yeah, so the college is it's entirely focused around being a data informed college to provide equitable outcomes or to like work towards those equitable outcomes.

-Participant #18, Research Analyst, White

Participant #20, a White administrator also provided their plans to revise the language in their mission because “anti-racism and equity don't show up anywhere in our current mission statement. So, as we modify the mission statement within the next strategic planning cycle that's something that's already been planned.” However, getting this language into the mission statement is challenging. For example, Participant #6 shared that as they revised their mission statement:

There really was a big push in getting that language in our mission statement and to specifically call out equity. I tried to have anti racism specifically called out as well. But I had a little bit of pushback.

-Participant #6, Administrator, Person of Color
The changes IR suggested in their institution or office’s mission suggest the need for more support in their work. One area of stakeholders on campus where IR highlighted the value of support was from the college’s leadership.

**Theme 2 Leadership Influence**

Given the varying placement and role of Institutional Research in collaboration across campus, another theme that emerged across interviews was the role that leadership plays in supporting IR equity work on community college campuses. IR repeatedly referenced the role that leadership played in their success and struggles on campus whether it was through their buy-in or with frequent turnover. In interviews, participants described the critical importance of having the chief executive’s support. For example, Participant #9, an administrator who identifies as a Person of Color shared, "Institutional Research lives and dies by the President of an institution.” Participant #12, an administrator who also identifies as a Person of Color elaborated further and shared:

*When you have the chief executive having that mindset, in that position, that vision, it permeates throughout the institution, and I give him ...so much credit for leading that effort and really empowering the rest of us across the college to help lead those efforts. So, I never felt like I was going to spaces or broaching conversations or talking, however difficult and challenging. It might be topics that I shouldn't be touching that I shouldn't be approaching. The support there from our executive leadership has always been there and thankfully he’s been with us now; I think going on X years. And so, it helps to have that stability, that vision and that support from someone.*

Inversely, interview participants also described ways that a lack of leadership buy-in impacted their work. For example, Participant #3 shared:
every time you get a new president, you, you get all these staff changes at the top. It’s happened to me a couple of times. So again, they're no different. And so, with all of the staff changes in management, it wasn't really truly implemented at an institutional level.

-Participant #3, Research Analyst, Person of Color

Participants also described how their work was not progressing because of the lack of leadership support and they were encountering barriers as there was an interim leader. For example, Participant #6 shared:

“I would say, in the first like, ____ years I was there. It was a little bit of an uphill battle, just because we didn’t have that full support of, you know, higher leadership, and I’m talking about like, the president level, the VP level, and that sort of thing.”

-Participant #6, Administrator, Person of Color

Each of the examples presented for this theme described IR beliefs about the influence of the college leadership on their ability to support equitable outcomes. They also described interactions with other college stakeholder groups that can support or hinder their work to support equity. IR who engages in equity work also interact with faculty and staff in numerous ways that they described in their interviews.

**Theme 3 Interactions with Faculty & Staff**

As IR interview participants reflected on their areas of progress and challenges in their equity work, they referenced the ways that their interactions with faculty and staff impacted their equity work. At a minimum, Participant #7, a Research Analyst and Person of Color shared that “we (their colleagues across the college) have to accept that we needed that argument to rest (about racism existing), and we need to talk about institutional racism and racism in the
classroom that students are experiencing and try something different.” As they described their experiences, IR interview participants elevated instances when faculty members and staff members were resistant to focusing on racial equity and where they have made progress. As they reflected on the resistance, Participant #3 shared:

> When you talk about equity as like a problem, like I think generally people aren’t against it. But then when it comes to where you see differences, people are more like, it’s socio-economic status...I think for me, when you say focus on socio economic status, are you saying they're using that as a proxy for race?

-Participant #3, Research Analyst, Person of Color

An additional type of resistance to equity work from faculty was shared by Participant #6, who mentioned:

> “The category would be the people who would just either completely ignore it or say it wasn't their problem. They treat everyone equally so it's fine type of comments...mostly just to be like, the, the counter argument of why do we need to do this or we're not doing this? I give everyone the same opportunity. So, it's not my problem type of thing.”

-Participant #6, Administrator, Person of Color

However, there were examples of progress with faculty and staff in support of equity. Participant #16 reflected on an area of progress where they are closing equity gaps at her college and shared:

> It is___ faculty members, we have one counselor supporting one researcher, which is myself as a supporting person, the coordinators reporting, but faculty members are the ones that make the decision what they're going to change. ... they've done a lot of
research and reading and now they trained themselves and people in the college on how to do equitable syllabus and equitable grading and how they approach students and all these policies of attendance, participations, how it impacts disproportionately impacted...how amazing this department is doing regarding closing equity gaps... it's just it's just been wonderful.

-Participant #16, Research Analyst, Person of Color

In their reflections on how to advance equity work through collaboration with faculty, Participant #2, Research Analyst and Person of Color also shared that “talking with faculty ...you know, understand that the faculty are, by and large, you know that they are the most influential group, especially when it comes to shaping policy.”

Aside from their interactions related to equity work, IR also experienced different types of interactions with faculty and staff as a result of the pandemic. For example, Participant #12 shared:

*I know that some folks have confided in me that the pandemic was difficult for them. The isolation that they experienced was really challenging for them and I can see too how the challenges associated with personal challenges that key folks that are college staff or faculty have experienced could have in turn resulted in diminished gains or with respect to these broader equity efforts that we're trying to accomplish because then maybe this isn't just. I'm thinking about this intuitively. If you're not well individually, maybe you're not in the best place to contribute then outwardly to others, others’ lives, and other spaces because you are not in a good place to begin with. So, I can see how the pandemic may have negatively affected that work because people were rightly so focused on just getting better themselves.*
As they engage in this challenging and collaborative work with colleagues across campus, IR described the ways that impacted their motivation and capacity to support equity at their college.

**Findings from Research Questions #2**

What specifically (internal and external) influences institutional researchers: motivation and capacity to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?

**Theme 4 The Power of Peers**

In interviews, IR were asked how they sustain their motivation to continue engaging in equity work. They frequently referenced their peers as a source of motivation and for IR who were women of color, they also referenced other peers who identify as people of color. For example, Participant #6, a former IR administrator, and Person of Color shared that when “those micro aggressions happened, or when that pushback happens. You know, there's support for me, so, having that community helps.” Participant #14 also elaborated on the way that other women of color helped sustain her motivation:

*I think it helps that I have such a strong network of other women of color that I can confide in. And it becomes easier to talk about this stuff when you and you also don't feel alone. It's so like, I'm on like, a million group texts with different combinations of women. Like in work, but also not in work, right?*

-Participant #14, IR Administrator and Person of Color

Participant #6 also shared the way that colleagues in other programs on her campus were a source of support in sustaining her motivation. She highlighted managers from student equity
and success programs at her college. She also spoke about their ability to understand her experience and stated:

I think they were really big help because we could we were all Latino. I think we had this kind of shared experience that we could validate our feelings with. Whereas if I had mentioned some of this stuff to my White colleagues, they would be like, that's not happening. And at least had having that community as someone who was in similar situation helped. Because then I didn't feel like that was crazy.

-Participant #6, Former Administrator, Person of Color

Theme 5 Staffing Challenges

In addition to navigating challenges with motivation, IR also discussed staffing challenges that impacted their capacity to engage in their work to support equitable outcomes. The analysis of data suggests that the number of IR staff that were available to do the work in their departments. Participant #11 discussed issues with his workload and explained:

So, we need help with different projects, and because like I said, our office is small, my time is limited. I can only do so much. So, I think that's the biggest issue is with our department's understaffing. I guess my colleague and I have a lot going on, and we wear multiple hats. Even though my title is a research analyst, I feel like I'm more of a senior research analyst.

-Participant #11, Research Analyst, Person of Color
Now that offices are growing, they are navigating the challenges of demands created by the culture shift to the use of more data. As Participant #18 reflected on her the demands of the work before their team expanded, she shared:

*just having a bigger staff because even like the six months that I worked that it was just me and (insert name of coworker), ...I even was starting to feel like overworked you know, and like this is a lot of work. I don't know how she was doing this for so many years on her own.*

-Participant #18, Research Analyst, White

With the addition of equity funds to hire institutional researchers to support equity work, IR shared examples of how they were hired to support equity and then used to meet other general IR staffing needs.

“I kind of felt a little bit guilty knowing that these programs were paying for my paycheck, but I wasn't getting them kind of like my full-time support, or even like, even like halftime support, you know, type of thing. So, I would always try to, you know, make sure their needs were met, to the best of my time and my ability, and I developed great relationships with the managers and the people that were working in those areas... I think the managers in those areas kind of understood that it was always going to be like a kind of like, not top priority.”

-Participant #6, Former Administrator, Person of Color

Another research analyst also shared their current experience with equity work. Participant #3, a Research Analyst, and Person of Color, shared the way that staff members are hired using equity funds and then the work is delegated to another staff member with the expertise. He shared that
in his office they "have someone else brand new to the system (for the equity work), so because I have previous experience, my director assigned me to do the work."

**Theme 6 The Value of Emotional Intelligence**

As institutions and IR are expanding their capacity to do work in support of equity, there are some specific skills that emerged as a priority based on what IR shared related to how they made progress and their ideas about what is necessary to advance the work. As Participant #2, shared, IR have the responsibility to examine their work by being mindful about the following question:

> "How are we thinking about this information that we're collecting and how it will impact (others) because as a system, you know, part of, at least for the California Community Colleges, it's also a giant data gathering machine. I mean, we report on a lot, right, a lot of information about real people, sensitive information."

*Participant #2, Administrator, Person of Color*

Across multiple interviews, IR shared the importance of emotional intelligence to navigate complex to interpersonal dynamics and conversations regarding data pertaining to race and equity. Participant #20, an IR administrator, shared that “this profession (IR) attracts people who like math, that's not aligned with people who are able to effectively communicate.” As Participant #14, another IR administrator and Person of Color reflected on what is needed for the field, she posed the question “How do I get more people in the field to feel comfortable because kind of personality wise, most institutional researcher, I think, tend to like to be behind a computer and not rock the boat, right?” This need for interpersonal skills was articulated by Participant #10:
They don’t know what’s available... so there’s also that piece of being able to discern what you’re asking for versus what you need... It takes time for a researcher to sit with you and talk to you and say, okay, tell me about your program. Tell me what, you know, why do you tell me what’s behind this request? Tell me what question is you’re trying to answer? You know, that takes time to try to get through all that and say, oh, well, what you requested is this, but what you needed that.

-Participant #10, Former IR Administrator, Person of Color

Participant #20 also similarly shared that in thinking about what it takes to advance in IR roles that support equity, IR must be “able to have difficult conversations and be comfortable with difficult conversations and be able to communicate data well.” An additional piece related to interpersonal communication was mentioned by Participant #6, a former Administrator who stated that IR must know:

how to deal with the backlash that you might get how to one does not take it personally yourself. Know how to have those kinds of conversations with people, because oftentimes, these subjects can be very triggering for one reason or another to different people.

-Participant #6, Former Administrator, Person of Color

While there was insufficient evidence to elevate self-care to the level of a theme or sub-theme, since the findings repeatedly elevate complex communication skills to advance difficult conversations in support of equity work, Participant #14 mentioned:
We talk about race almost every single day... so I can't turn that off. It's not just a job for me. So, I think creating boundaries... I have to say, no... just for my self-care, like, I need this to be a space where I am just a family member, you know, like a community member.

Participant #14, IR Administrator, Person of Color

Since IR supporting equity are engaged in so many conversations related to race, there is also a skillset or capacity associated with racial consciousness that emerged through the analysis. Participant #12, an IR administrator, and Person of Color shared that he was "in a position to be able to address the gaps. Ultimately, doing that work means we can enhance a sense of community that sense of belonging for these particularly the racially minoritized populations that we serve." Participant #7, a Research Analyst, and Person of Color stated “ultimately...we need to talk about institutional racism and racism in the classroom that students are experiencing and try something different.” IR levels of racial consciousness also comes with a level of self-reflection that Participant #18 shared:

I don't want anybody to feel like I'm taking over the conversation. Right. And that's something that has been coming up more recently is the IR field is very, it's not diverse at all. And yet, we're all studying people of color...Whatever campus it is, right, it's people of color that are disproportionately impacted and White people that are studying them. And it's like, do we know the right questions to ask? And so, like it or not, the answer is no. And so, it's like, are we getting the results are we are we really getting the answers we need type of thing.

-Participant #18, Research Analyst, White

Findings from Research Question #3
How does participation in a community of practice focused on equity with other IR influence IR motivation to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes, knowledge of how to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes, and capacity to effectively use data to support equitable outcomes?

**Theme 7 Equity Practice Growth**

This study sought to explore more about how participation in communities of practice focused on equity influences IR motivation, knowledge, and capacity to support equitable outcomes. The theme of equity practice growth speaks to the types of support that IR found beneficial in supporting them in their equity journey. Before reviewing the evidence that supports this theme, there were a few examples from the IR interviews where participants discussed how their identity intersected with their role and some tensions in their equity work that provide more context for the need for the practice growth and the types of supports, they found most useful. Participant #17, a research analyst described his work in the following way:

*To be an effective institutional researcher, the way you contextualize the data goes a long way and how people discuss it and make decisions and if you don't have equity, if you're not operating from an equity framework, you could be perpetuating the wrongs against, you know, the students that the system is set up, to dole out.*

Participant #17, Research Analyst, Person of Color

Participant #17 later shared:

*I think this type of work is going to hit differently. Especially for people who are impacted by inequity. It is different because you see it in your family, you see how it really plays out of the inability to get, you know, equitable education, and being able to not being able to get employment, to support a family. You know the dysfunction that it*
can cause, you know, it’s traumatic and dramatic. And so, when I think about the outcomes from students, I’m not just thinking about it, it’s a quantitative outcome, I’m understanding the fact that people’s families are going to be dramatically impacted, right... I’ve seen that just really the dark side of these outcomes, and it just doesn't hit the same when other people who don’t experience these things.

While the experiences of people of color and people who identify as White vary when engaging in equity work, Participant #18 who identifies as White described how she thinks about their equity work and named another tension for the field:

Something that has been coming up more recently is the IR field, it's not diverse at all. And yet, we’re all studying these like people of color on whatever campus it is, right? It's people of color that are disproportionately impacted and White people that are studying them and it’s like, do we know the right questions to ask? And so, the answer is no. And so, it's like, are we getting the results are we are we really getting the answers we need type of thing?

-Participant #18, Research Analyst, White

Interview participants expressed ways they supported their growth. While participants did explicitly name their participation in the community of practice, they also frequently referenced their participation in various types of learning experiences offered by multiple organizations to support their equity work. For example, IR referenced the conferences, webinars, listservs, and institutes offered by the Research & Planning Group (RP), a non-profit that predominately offers supports to institutional research, planning, and effectiveness (IRPE) professionals in California community colleges (CCC), to “help make data accessible and to bridge silos for all educators in
our system in order to improve outcomes for — and the lives of — all students.” Specifically, Participant #4, an IR Administrator shared:

*I really identify with the most is the RP group, and I think it provides the most venue for getting California Community researchers together to talk about some of these issues and get on the same page about equity and drive conversations.*

-Participant #4, Administrator, White

They also frequently referenced professional development provided by the USC Center for Urban Education (CUE) which "helps faculty, administrators and other college and university staff better understand the harmful effects of invisible forms of racism on their campuses.” Upon reflecting on her learning journey, Participant #6, Former Administrator, and Person of Color shared “The Center for Urban Education, I think was a big one that I kind of found. And I think that one was this one that specifically called out ... the language that you use for this type of thing.”

IR also referenced other regional and national conveners of institutional researchers like the American Institutes for Research (AIR) and California Association for Institutional Research (CAIR). Participant #9, an Administrator and Person of Color shared “I really enjoy going to the association institutional research conferences. Because to me, those are researchers and they're engaged, they're serious about the literature and the work.” In addition to describing the professional learning opportunities that have supported them on their journey, IR also explored the aspects of the experiences that they deemed the most helpful.
**Theme 8 Peer Learning**

When IR described the most salient aspects of their experiences in professional learning opportunities, they shared the value they perceived in learning from their peers. Participant #12, an IR administrator who identifies as a Person of Color shared:

> The facets of my work have more to do with relationship building, that have more to do with conversation, and being more aware that those aspects of my job are critical. In fact, probably more critical than the numerical aspects of a job was, for me, an aha moment. So having opportunities where I say for instance, you and I can read something and have a conversation about it reflect on our own lives, and just talk about what it means to each of us and how we can use it to improve our respective colleges or organization. That’s huge, that is so significant, and much more significant than just attending a workshop where folks are outlining different strategies that are helpful. It's just engaging in a way that you have this deep dialogue with another person, another group of people and you can learn from each other. So, I am still learning I feel so much. So often. I feel like a novice. So much of what I do being in those spaces and in hearing about other people's lived experience. I can't tell you how often those types of students result in those aha moments reframe and makes sense. I've had an experience like that, and I had never thought of it in that manner. I'd never approached it that way.

-Participant #12, IR Administrator, Person of Color

Even through experiences not directly named as connected to an organization, IR described the value in learning from one another. For example, Participant #5 shared:

> LA County and IE like, like Eastern LA County ...once a month we would drive out there and spend the day together and you know, talk about what we really share issues and
then have a meal together now we just do it through zoom, which is great because sometimes, you know, I don't want to drive an hour and a half one way on a Friday. So, they're there, they're there for support. They provide a lot of resources.

-Participant #5, Administrator, White

Participant #19 also discussed the way that she valued the learning opportunities presented through connections with other peers of color. She described their connection as a network:

*We have a very strong network of managers of color with true hearts for equity, where we can be very candid with one another. We've built that trust and I'm people know me as someone who's pretty frank anyway from the board all the way down.*

-Participant #19, Research Analyst, Person of Color

**Theme 9 Activism or Advocacy**

Some of the equity work that IR are involved in is related to system level policies. For example, IR Participant #17, Research Analyst and Person of Color discussed the policies and shared "the state (system) has passed a number of initiatives over the last few years, whether it was student centered funding formula, AB 705, which kind of starts students at transfer level math and English, as opposed to being in developmental courses, guided pathways....” Given the intersection of their role with policy and so many other areas, there were multiple references across interview regarding the role of institutional researchers. IR, who had been in the field for many years, described the ways that the role has evolved over time and there were differing perspectives on the role of IR as activist in support of equity for students. For example, Participant #19, an IR administrator, and Person of Color who supports the notion of a researcher activist shared her thoughts:
that's kind of a really important lesson for me, activists to kind of learn from. Right? We need to learn from our folks in the 60s because those of us in the 80s were kind of reacting to the whole. You guys were quiet long enough. We took some meetings. We're not going to take meetings. So now I'd say you know, it's too important. It's getting really bad. It's kind of critical that we find those allies. We find those advocates, and we work together and just you know try to knock off some of those edges a little bit. Check. You know whether it's your own personal hurts and anger in the past and your past, and if the issue is your own pride, get rid of that. The work is too important. So that's kind of where I'm at now.

-Participant #19, IR Administrator, Person of Color

While Participant #13, an IR administrator who identifies as White shared a different perspective because he believed that the role of IR is to be objective:

I will tell you I do take issue with some of the hearing out of the RP group ... that we are supposed to be activists and I don't agree with that. I just if we have no reason to call it that the real problem, but I feel like my role is to be that that objective data, I want to present the data so that I want to try my own, whatever my own desires or prejudices are, I don't want those to get in the way either. Or, if I'm just a pro equity person, that can actually skew how I interpret the data.

-Participant #13, IR Administrator, White

As Participant #13 further elaborated on his perspective related to the role of IR as activist, he clarified that it is not that he does not believe in supporting equity, it was his belief that the language or description of IR as activist was imprecise. Instead, Participant #13 shared “I'm
supportive of, you know, if I'm supportive of equity, my gosh. But yeah, I guess. I do see this somewhat generational thing.”

Summary of Findings

Figure 6.

Summary of Findings

The findings presented in this chapter included themes that were identified through analysis of the transcript data for each research question. Research Question #1 was focused on examining the factors that influence IR ability to support equity and the related themes included: shifting organizations, leadership influences, and their interactions with faculty and staff. Research Question #2 examined the factors that influenced IR motivation and capacity to support equity. The finding suggests that motivation is influenced by the power of peers while capacity was influenced by staffing challenges and emotional intelligence. Research Question #3 examined how participation in a community of practice or other learning experience influenced IR motivation, knowledge, and capacity to support equitable outcomes. The themes that were presented based on analysis included equity practice growth, peer learning, and activism vs advocacy. The next chapter will include a discussion of the findings in relation to the conceptual framework, empirical evidence, and recommendations for future research.
Chapter 5: Discussion & Conclusion

This study was designed to examine which factors influence how institutional researchers at California community colleges use data to support equitable outcomes. It was driven by the desire to understand how individuals who serve in a role that is not frequently studied in research were navigating equity work in the largest and one of the most diverse community college systems in the country. Most of the institutional researchers who participated in this study were currently working as an administrators, senior analysts, or analysts in Offices of Institutional Research or Offices of Institutional Effectiveness at California community colleges (n=18) except for three individuals who formerly served in that role. Through the interviews, they shared about their experiences and journey. They identified the bright spots and areas of progress in their work. They discussed the challenges they were encountering in their roles. They also shared how they were learning and growing in their practice. This chapter will include a summary of findings from their interviews in connection to the five-part conceptual framework and the empirical literature on institutional researchers and equity. This chapter will also include a discussion of the limitations of this study, connections to institutional research practices, and recommendations for further research.
The conceptual framework for this study integrated elements from existing frameworks that address various aspects of the internal and external environment of Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) where institutional researchers (IR) work. Each of the frameworks described provide a lens to view the institutional researcher (Living Systems Framework, Equity Minded Practitioners', and Ecological Systems Theory-microsystem), and the college, district, or system (Berger’s Organizational Dimensions, Ecological Systems Theory, and Smith’s Framework for Diversity). The findings related to the institutional researcher and the related framework will be explored first.
Frameworks for Institutional Researchers

Ford’s Living Systems Framework

In this study, Ford’s Living System’s Framework (Ford, 1987) was used to examine the factors in the IR work environment that IR use to execute the steps necessary to attain their goals of supporting the use of data to support equitable student outcomes. As it was previously stated in Chapter 2, IR can attain their goals and aspirations (to achieve equitable outcomes) if they have the motivation, capacity, and environment which supports their work.

Motivation

The interview protocol included a question that specifically asked institutional researchers how they sustained their motivation to support equitable outcomes. The findings suggest that peers served as a source of support that helped some IR sustain their motivation to support equitable outcomes. The findings also showed that women of color identified other peers of color as their source of motivation. Research in human behavior suggests that in some instances, they were navigating complex organizational environments.

Capacity

The findings also state that IR were navigating offices with limited capacity due to being understaffed or working to accommodate the growing demand for data in institutions where they were strengthening their data culture. They also described how their capacity was impacted by the hiring of new IR team members with funds that were allocated to equity and then subsequently using those new hires to address other departmental needs that were not related to supporting equity or using other staff members who have the skills set to engage in the equity work. While the IR who were in these types of situations expressed their desire to continue supporting the equity work because of their personal commitment, this resource challenge may
influence their experience in their office which is one of the systems referenced in Bronfenbrenner's (1993) Ecological Systems Theory (EST).

**Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Bronfenbrenner’s (1993) EST examines the factors within the levels of ecological structures. This study used definitions for the types of environments where IR were aligned with Mendoza, Malcom, and Parish (2015). Hence, in this study, the microsystem in education was used to refer to the setting where the individual (in this instance, Institutional Researchers) engages in face-to-face interactions. The microsystem is inclusive of the factors in the immediate environment of the institutional researcher including the OIR or OIE. The previously mentioned staffing challenges in IR are occurring within the microsystem of the office of Institutional Research or Institutional Effectiveness and has implications for the other departments that collaborate with IR and rely on them for the data as well as the dynamics within the office where staff members know that they or their colleagues were hired to do one job using one source of funding that may not be aligned with their typical duties on a daily basis. In other instances where they are performing equity related work and enduring the consequences associated with racialized equity labor, this also has implications for IR wellbeing.

Another finding of the study that related to Bronfenbrenner’s framework was IR interactions with faculty and staff. While IR are working within an OIR or OIE, equity work requires engagement across departments. Their collaborative work occurs outside of their office in the mesosystem, the interconnected or linked interactions in their environment that includes the college campus or district where the OIR would connect with other offices through their assessment and evaluative work. For example, when describing their progress, IR mentioned their work in various student services departments, with faculty, and with academic departments. They also described challenges working across the college where they encountered resistance to
acknowledging equity gaps or attributing issues to socio economic status. These issues are related to the varying levels of equity mindedness described by Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon (2015).

**Equity Minded Practitioners**

According to Bensimon et al (2012) equity minded practitioners are described as “being (1) race conscious, (2) institutionally focused, (3) evidence based, (4) systemically aware, and (5) action oriented.” It could be assumed, that these attributes would be universally observed among IR who were working to support equity. IR who participated in interviews sporadically made statements which alluded to various aspects of equity minded practitioners. They were aware and spoke candidly about race, they were focused on their institution and their role requires a reliance on the evidence. As institutional actors within a system, there were examples of IR describing how racism overall was systemic and made references to the larger California community college system where they work. However, it should be noted that the protocol did not include a question that specifically asked interview participants to provide evidence of each area or attribute of equity minded practitioners. Instead, the researcher analyzed the data and coded for evidence of the attributes of equity-minded practitioners. While this model presented by Bensimon et al (2012) was designed to be applied to equity minded practitioners in education, the finding that one of the capacities that is necessary for advancement in IR in support of equity is emotional intelligence suggests that there is an opportunity to expand the model.

**Frameworks for Colleges, Districts, and Systems**

**Berger’s Organizational Dimensions**

The collegial, systemic, and bureaucratic dimensions of Berger’s (2000) five dimensions of educational organization behavior were reflected in the findings about institutional researchers’ experiences. The **collegial dimension** accounts for collaboration and engagement,
the experiences of people, and the way that multiple perspectives are included in decision making processes. This was reflected in the way that IR described their experiences working with other offices across their college. For example, when Participant #16 described their progress with collaborative work with faculty and counselors at the college but made it clear that faculty have the power to make the final decision about changes because their work was centered on changes in the classroom.

The example provided by Participant # 16 also reflects the bureaucratic dimension of Berger’s (2000) model examines which examines coherence in the processes for making decisions in the institution. Also, as Participant #2 described their experience working with faculty as an Analyst, they described the way that it is known that faculty hold substantial influence in shaping policies at their college. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this dimension is inclusive of the formality and structures associated with the college’s hierarchy, rules, and policies. The quote conveys the way that while consultation and collaboration were a part of the process, faculty were the final decision makers for matters related to teaching and curriculum.

Next, the systemic dimension accounts for the way that community colleges are a part of the larger complex organization with parts that are interrelated and that connect with the larger environment in different ways. IR interview participants also discussed funding. For example, Participant # 7 talked about how the funding from the system “has been instrumental” because beyond supporting their role related to equity, it also funded categorical programs and supports to various affinity groups. They also discussed the complexities of data collection and aggregation for system level analysis like the example shared by Participant # 2 who described system level requests to share mental health referral information or information regarding other vulnerable populations. IR and the system gather large amounts of data but ultimately, that data is connected to real people who can be impacted the decisions and actions of IR and the system.
The systemic dimension was also reflected in statements from IR Participant #17 who discussed policies like AB 705 or initiatives such as Guided Pathways. These systems level policy changes have implications for IR, faculty, and students in the CCC system who are implementing initiatives and policies. This example within the systemic dimension of Berger’s (2002) model can also be applied to the exosystem in EST.

**Ecological Systems Theory**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, within Bronfenbrenner’s (2002) model, for this study, the exosystem refers to the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office and system which enacts policies, initiatives, and other administrative functions. In this study, IR described their interactions with the exosystem in their descriptions of the ways that policies (AB 705 and Guided Pathways), system level data requirements, and the system focus on equity were impacting their work.

As Participant #3 mentioned, IR have an opportunity to focus on equity intentionally and explicitly with the support of CCC system. They also described seeing changes in the larger social and cultural context (macrosystem) which is reflected in the ways that people are engaging in their equity work. For example, one of the findings of this study was related to the theme of IR as activists or advocates. On a superficial level, interview participants who mentioned this shift in perspective had mixed views on whether “activist” was an appropriate role for IR. However, upon a more thorough review of the data, there appears to be an opportunity for IR to develop an operational definition of the term “researcher activist” because IR who opposed of the term described many activities in their work that were aligned with the IR who identified as researcher activist. Luguetti and Oliver (2018) described the role of activist researcher as:
focused on generating changes within communities through empowering both researchers and co-researchers to develop a critically conscious understanding of their relationship with the world (Freire, 1987; Maguire, 1993; McIntyre, 2006). Knowledge and understanding are co-produced where researchers follow as well as lead, and co-researchers lead as well as follow, and where both learn to resist the imposition of oppressive, disempowering, and commonly accepted practices (Cook-Sather, 2002; Freire, 1987; Luguetti et al., 2015). (p. 881)

It appears that the connotation of the term “activist,” rather than the methods and approach, may be a factor in the differing perspectives if the goal is to achieve equity for students.

IR who participated in interviews were working in institutional research during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. They described how the pandemic and murder of George Floyd in 2020, changed their work, created space for difficult conversations about race, and increased willingness to engage in equity work in some of their colleges. The COVID-19 pandemic can be described as an influence on IR equity work in the chronosystem (Guy-Evans, 2020). When IR were asked about how the pandemic has impacted their work or community, they described how their work shifted to online and created opportunities for interactions across campus in a different way. It also presented a set of challenges. For example, Participant #12 shared how the pandemic impacted college faculty and staff in different ways that impacted their capacity to engage in equity work. Aside from the personal difficulties that IR may have experienced during the pandemic, they also described the challenges of their equity work as colleges have repopulated and made decisions about shifts to in-person work, instruction, and support. These shifts in decision-making along with other findings will be described considering Smith’s (2020) framework for diversity.
Smith’s Framework for Diversity

According to Smith’s (2020) framework, diversity should be embedded and reflected in access and success of underrepresented student populations, campus climate and intergroup relations, education and scholarship, and institutional viability and vitality (Smith, 2020). The previously mentioned shift to in-person work (campus climate and intergroup relationships), in-person instruction (education and scholarship), and in-person student support (student success) that IR are navigating are explicitly connected to the framework in the following ways.

Connected to supporting diversity. As some colleges have returned to in-person work for IR offices this has mixed implications for the work. While some IR found the work from home environment conducive to offering the space to focus on their work while still having the ability to work across campus virtually others have found the decisions to return to campus arbitrary leadership-based decisions. Some IR raised concerns about the decision to increase in-person course offerings because the data suggests that students preferred online courses that offer space for their lives and personal responsibilities (work, family, etc.). There were also references to the ways that students need continued access to online support because of accessibility issues on their campuses and the complexity of their lives outside of school. Their ability to navigate the conversations with faculty and staff from academic departments and student services about data driven decisions about course offerings has implications for the vitality of the institutions as the navigate declining enrollment and an evolving context for equity.

Discussion of Empirical Literature

Data Use for Equity

Most of the Research on IR use of data to support equity pre-dates the pandemic and the social justice movements of 2020 that IR interview participants described as the impetus for more cross-campus engagement in equity work. For example, Abrica and Rivas (2017) stated
that “Equity and advocacy for racial minority students are not routinely part of IR work” (p.44) in their qualitative study of institutional researchers. In Chapter 2, Hernandez (2018) suggested that scholars have intimated a shift in the field towards OIR explicitly working to address inequity in ways that center student needs and the students who are most disproportionately impacted. In this study, interview participants repeatedly shared examples of ways that they were thinking about and supporting equity and their focus on students who were disproportionately impacted. They demonstrated a level of race consciousness in their remarks about their work, role, and responsibilities (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2017). They also described the challenges they were facing in their equity work. For example, the issues raised by Participants #17 & #18 about the risk of perpetuating inequity, engaging in the work as a Person of Color, and the challenges of having IR teams that do not reflect the demographics of the populations they are serving elucidate where there are opportunities and gaps with IR who are engaging in equity work. Organizations like the RP Group and the USC Center for Urban Education are working to support IR in the growth and journey, but how can colleges better support the individuals who are positioned to carry the equity conversation across departments and levels of the institution?

**Organizational Shifts**

Felix and Ceballos (2022) examined the role of IR in supporting equity in California community colleges by conducting an analysis of their mission statements and found that 24% mentioned equity. They also elevated the need for IR to work collaboratively to identify the root causes and develop equity minded student success focused strategies. In this study, IR were asked about the ways that their equity work was reflected in their mission statements and how they would shift the mission statements of their office or college to support their equity work. Their feedback suggested that colleges need to shift their organizational practices. Some IR
suggested language that supports accountability and responsibility for supporting equitable outcomes within their office and across campus. There was also interest in being more specific about equity and antiracism in instances where colleges or offices included equity in their current statements.

**Equity Practices**

IR also shared specific practices they are using to support their equity work. One example that IR shared in their interviews was developing data coaching programs to help increase data literacy at their college. IR described the ways that they share data to help identify inequity including the communication approaches necessary to increase individual receptivity to equity data. They shared about their engagement with offices in academic departments and student services by responding to data requests, serving on college equity committees, participating in collaborative work groups with faculty, and participating in professional development.

**IR Work Environments**

While the previous research addresses where IR need to focus in supporting equity, this study also sought to understand what IR were already doing to support equity and the things in their environment that were influencing their work. IR named the tensions they navigated in presenting equity data, a passion for improving conditions for students, and practices they have developed to support their equity work. However, there is a level of vulnerability and trust required when engaging in work where IR are impacted personally. The literature suggests that people who engage in equity work that addresses race-based inequity and marginalization are engaging in racialized equity labor (Lerma, Hamilton, and Nielsen, 2021). This study found that IR also were engaging in racialized equity labor.
The existing literature about the work of IR does not address the complex intersection of simultaneously shifting a system, college, and practitioner’s practice in support of equity. However, this study sought to help the field understand more about what IR felt supported their equity work. Ultimately, the findings suggest that leadership influence plays a critical role in IR success. This is aligned with literature on the role of the community college presidents which also states that role of the president is critical in advancing diversity and equity (Rodriguez, 2015). Many IR described how their office was impacted by whether they had the support of the president because it impacted the resources allocated for their work and it also played a role in developing buy-in across campus. This is also aligned with Rodriguez (2015) who explicitly links progress in equity work to funding and describes that the president of the college should provide leadership to advance the conversations on equity across the college. IR described in interviews how C-Suite shifts and leadership transitions sometimes slowed or undermined their equity work. If the system supports equity but college leadership does not, or college leadership does and then a new president arrives who is averse of explicitly focusing on equity, how can IR advance equity work? It appears that there needs to be alignment between the system, C-Suite, and IR team to support IR equity work.

**Limitations**

In Chapter 3, there were multiple limitations of this study presented. For example, this study was focused on community colleges in a specific region in California and the California community college system is the largest in the country with colleges operating in such vastly different contexts. However, the findings provided allude to suggestions for practice about how institutional researchers can become more equity minded data leaders by shifting the supports that are offered them and the college environment whether they are working. In addition, the data
collected from institutional researchers are based on their perceptions and cannot be triangulated with other data sources.

Connections & Recommendations to Practice

This study sought to understand what influences institutional researchers' ability to engage in work that supports equitable outcomes for students in California community colleges. Based on the study findings, a series of recommendations are included below.

Peer Interaction & Networks: Ensure that professional development continues to include sufficient space for IR peer interaction and engagement. IR repeatedly described the value they say in connecting with peers for motivation and as a source for learning. By continuing to intentionally include time for them to engage with one another around problems of practice or their work during learning opportunities, IR may continue to build capacity in ways that feel authentic and supportive. It was also mentioned in interviews that peer networks of support among IR who identify as people of color have also helped individuals to sustain their motivation to do the work. It may be helpful for organizations that convene IR to develop formalized support spaces for various affinity groups in the IR community.

Strengthening Emotional Intelligence: Develop professional development focused on cultivating or strengthening emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills to strengthen the pipeline of future equity focused leaders. While skills related to methods, analysis, sensemaking, and data visualization are valuable, one skill that was described as essential for advancing professionally and in equitable work is emotional intelligence or interpersonal skills. It may be helpful to explore how professional development opportunities can include components that assist with the skills necessary to navigate difficult conversations related to race, power, and general resistance to change.
**Varied Forms of Professional Development:** Continue to fund and support multiple forms of professional learning opportunities that appeal to various learning styles and interests. When IR discussed their personal journey towards supporting equitable outcomes, they described multiple forms of professional learning. While the learning opportunities presented by the RP group were mentioned most frequently (webinars, conferences, and training sessions), IR also described the power in connections through conferences (AIR and CAIR), professional development provided by USC Center for Urban Education, participation in the SEPI learning community, and others. It is important to continue to make these spaces and funding for their participation available to continue to support their growth in their equity practice.

**Resource Allocation:** Provide instruction and oversight regarding resource allocation related to IR who are funded with equity dollars. With funding available to support additional IR to engage in equity work, it can be challenging in offices that are not appropriately staffed to fully allocate new team members to fully support equity work. However, when new IR who are hired do not engage in any equity work and equity related responsibilities are delegated to the only or few people of color in the IR office (even if they have an interest in this area), this presents an issue of equity among staff members in the office. If the intent of the funding is to support equity, then the percentage of time the new staff members should be allocated to supporting equity work should be clearly articulated and upheld.

**Mission Clarification:** Continue to revisit and refine college mission statements to reflect their focus more accurately on equity and student success. IR stated their interest in ensuring that mission statements clearly reflect what the college seeks to accomplish with its equity work and include language about shared responsibility for equity in ways that drive accountability. Colleges with mission statements that do not reflect this aspect of their work may want to revisit their statement to ensure alignment with their equity plans and activities.
Future Lines of Inquiry

The literature suggests that IR serve as “infomediaries” (Dowd et al, 2012; Milam, 2005), teachers (Bagshaw, 1999), and recent literature illuminate the role of social justice advocates (Hernández, Berumen, Zerquera, 2018). In interviews, IR discussed the tensions associated with the transition to the role of researcher activists. Future research should critically investigate differing views about the evolving role and responsibilities of IR. In interviews, IR presented differing views about the role of IR as activist for equity and the definition of researcher activist. Obtaining a shared understanding about what the current field needs and the terms that best suit their role may present an opportunity to increase buy-in among individuals in the IR community.

In interviews, IR frequently referenced the role of the president and leadership on advancing their equity work. Given the turnover rates in C-Suite and senior leadership at community colleges that were frequently referenced in interviews, volatility in the executive leadership and the implications this has for middle management who are carrying the equity work at their college may be an area for additional exploration.
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Appendix A Instrument

Institutional Researchers Equitable Outcomes

“Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I am Qiana Wallace, a PhD student in the Claremont Graduate School of Education. The interview is connected to a study of institutional researchers’ experience engaging in their role as institutional researchers at their institution and their perceptions of the factors that have contributed to or inhibited their ability to support equity.

During this 60–90-minute interview, you will be asked questions about your experiences with engaging in your role as an institutional researcher at your institution and your perceptions of the factors that have contributed to or inhibited your ability to support equity. Findings from this study will be used to inform the development of system and college leaders at community colleges in California. All responses will be completely confidential. Did you have a chance to review the informed consent form for participation in this interview? Please sign the form if you are willing to participate. If after reading the consent form you would prefer not to participate, you can leave this interview.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any question for any reason without it being held against you. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future connection with anyone at Claremont Graduate University. Do you consent to participating in this interview? If so, please state your name and title for the recording.”

If consent obtained, proceed to the interview questions below.

Background Questions

1. Describe your current role and responsibility on your campus?
   a. How long have you served in this role?
   b. How has your role evolved over time?

2. Describe the ways that equity is reflected in the mission statement of your office and/or institution.
   a. What recommendations for shifts or adjustments would you make to the mission statement in support of equity?

3. How does the system and district focus on equity impact your work as an institutional researcher?
   a. In what ways have the system/district supported your equity work?
   b. What barriers to your equity work would you like to see the system or district office address? How?
   c. Are there any system level policies or practices that have impacted your equity work?
4. How has the pandemic and other events in your community impacted your equity work?
5. How would you describe your experiences in working with offices across campus to support equitable student outcomes?
   a. Where have you experienced progress?
   b. What challenges have you encountered? How are you overcoming them?

6. How would you describe your personal journey towards supporting equitable outcomes in your role as an institutional researcher?
   a. What lessons have you learned on your journey towards using data to support equitable student outcomes?

7. Where would you like to grow in your personal equity journey?
   a. What support or learning opportunities are currently available to you?
   b. What aspects of the learning opportunities have been most helpful?
   c. What changes would you make to the professional learning opportunities you have participated in for institutional researchers who are supporting equity?

8. What specific practices do you engage in to advance your equity work?
   a. How did you learn about the practices you use?
   b. How do you sustain your motivation to continue to work to support equity for students?

9. Please share any other items related to your equity work that have not been addressed.
Appendix B Informed Consent

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN

INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCHERS IN SUPPORT OF EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

STUDY LEADERSHIP. You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Qiana Wallace, a doctoral student in the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University. Gwen Garrison, PhD, a Clinical Professor in the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University will serve as the faculty advisor for this project.

PURPOSE. The purpose of this study is to understand the environmental factors which impact institutional researchers' ability to support equitable student outcomes at California community college.

ELIGIBILITY. To be in this study, you must be an institutional researcher employed by a California Community College to be selected for this study.

PARTICIPATION. During the study, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview. The interview will include a series of questions regarding your experiences with engaging in your role as an institutional researcher at your institution and your perceptions of the factors that have contributed to or inhibited your ability to support equity. The interview should last 60-90 minutes in length. Each interview will be audio recorded and transcribed for accuracy.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION. The risks that you run by taking part in this study are minimal and not higher than those faced in everyday life. The risk includes being asked questions you may not feel comfortable answering. You are free to skip any questions that make you
uncomfortable. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may stop participation at any time.

**BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION.** I do not expect that the study will benefit you personally. However, participating in this study will help researchers and practitioners understand the experiences of institutional researchers supporting equitable student outcomes at community colleges. The study will benefit the researcher by allowing them to present and publish findings at national conferences and journals.

**COMPENSATION.** For taking part in this study, you will be paid a $25 gift card after completion of the study. Every participant will receive the payment after you complete the interview.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION.** Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any question for any reason without it being held against you. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future connection with anyone at Claremont Graduate University.

**CONFIDENTIALITY.** Your individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. We may share the data we collect with other researchers, but we will not reveal your identity with it. To protect the confidentiality of your responses, I will assign you a pseudonym and remove all identifiable information. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed for accuracy. Only the research team will have access to the audio recordings and your name, and any identifiable information will be removed from the transcription. Once the interviews are transcribed, they will be destroyed. All files will be kept in a password protected document.
FURTHER INFORMATION. If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact me at qiana.wallace@cgu.edu or 951-741-1470. The CGU Institutional Review Board has approved this project. You may contact the CGU Board with any questions or issues at (909) 607-9406 or at irb@cgu.edu. A copy of this form will be given to you if you wish to keep it.

CONSENT. Your signature below means that you understand the information on this form, that someone has answered all questions you may have about this study, and you voluntarily agree to participate in it.

Signature of Participant _____________________ Date ____________

Printed Name of Participant ____________________

The undersigned researcher has reviewed the information in this consent form with the participant and answered any of his or her questions about the study.

Signature of Researcher _____________________ Date ____________

Printed Name of Researcher ____________________
Appendix C Recruiting Materials

Dear (Insert Interviewee Name),

Are you an Institutional Researcher at a California community college? If so, we would like to hear from you.

We are conducting a study about institutional researchers' use of data to support equitable outcomes for students in California community colleges and we are inviting you to participate in an individual interview.

During the 60-minute interview, you can expect to answer questions about

- Your experiences with engaging in your role as an institutional researcher at your college
- Your perceptions of the factors that have contributed to or inhibited your ability to support equity.

Findings from this study will be used to inform the development of system and college leaders at community colleges in California. All responses will be confidential, and your participation is completely voluntary.

If you are interested in participating, please book your interview using our scheduling link or contact Qiana Wallace at qiana.wallace@cgu.edu.
Appendix D Demographic Survey

Institutional Researchers in Support of Equitable Outcomes

Thank you for your interest in participating in the study of Institutional Researchers and equitable outcomes. This study is designed to examine what is driving the Institutional Researchers' success.

The next "Informed Consent" page provides more in-depth information of the study and an opportunity to for you to "agree" or "not agree" to participation in the study.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Qiana Wallace at qiana.wallace@cgu.edu.

Informed Consent INFORMED CONSENT

You are invited to “Institutional Researchers in Support of Equitable Outcomes” a research project. Volunteering may benefit you directly, and you will be helping the investigators understand more about the conditions that support institutional researchers at community colleges who are engaging in work that supports equitable student outcomes. If you volunteer, you will participate in a Zoom interview. This will take about 60-90 minutes of your time. You will also complete a brief demographic survey that should take five minutes to complete. Volunteering for this study involves no more risk than what a typical person experiences on a regular day. Your involvement is entirely up to you. You may withdraw at any time for any reason. Please continue reading for more information about the study.

STUDY LEADERSHIP. You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Qiana Wallace, a doctoral student in the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University. Gwen Garrison, PhD a Clinical Professor in the School of Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University will serve as the faculty advisor for this project.

PURPOSE. The purpose of this study is to understand the environmental factors which impact institutional researchers' ability to support equitable student outcomes at a California community college

ELIGIBILITY. To be in this study, you must be an institutional researcher employed by a California Community College to be selected for this study.

PARTICIPATION. During the study, you will be asked to participate in an individual interview. The interview will include a series of questions regarding your experiences with
engaging in your role as an institutional researcher at your institution and your perceptions of the factors that have contributed to or inhibited your ability to support equity. The interview should last 60-90 minutes in length and participants shall receive a $25 gift card upon completion of the interview. Each interview will be audio recorded and transcribed for accuracy.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION. The risks that you run by taking part in this study are minimal and not higher than those faced in everyday life. The risk includes being asked questions you may not feel comfortable answering. You are free to skip any questions that make you uncomfortable. Participation in this study is voluntary and you may stop participation at any time.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION. This study presents participants (institutional researchers) with an opportunity to talk about their own journey with equity. Participating in this study will also help researchers and practitioners understand the experiences of institutional researchers supporting equitable student outcomes at community colleges. The study will benefit the researcher by allowing them to present and publish findings at national conferences and journals.

COMPENSATION. For taking part in this study, you will be paid a $25 gift card after completion of the interview. Every participant will receive the payment after they complete the interview.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any question for any reason without it being held against you. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future connection with anyone at Claremont Graduate University.

CONFIDENTIALITY. Your individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. We may share the data we collect with other researchers, but we will not reveal your identity with it. To protect the confidentiality of your responses, I will assign you a pseudonym and remove all identifiable information. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed for accuracy. Only the research team will have access to the audio recordings and your name, and any identifiable information will be removed from the transcription. Once the interviews are transcribed, they will be destroyed. All files will be kept in a password protected document.

FURTHER INFORMATION. If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact me at qiana.wallace@cgu.edu or 951-741-1470. The CGU Institutional Review Board has approved this project #4447. You may contact the CGU Board with any questions or issues at (909) 607-9406 or at irb@cgu.edu. You may print a copy of this consent form for your records.
Please select your choice below.

Clicking on the “Agree” button indicates that
· You have read the above information
· You voluntarily agree to participate
· You are 18 years of age or older.
  o Agree (9)
  o Do not Agree (10)

Demographics Survey
Your participation in this demographic survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason.

Your survey answers will be sent to a link at Qualtrics.com where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. Your responses will remain confidential.

Q13 What is your current title?
________________________________________________________________

Q4 What is the name of your current department?
_______________________________________________________________

Q5 How long have you served in your current role at your college?
  o Less than one year (1)
  o 1-2 years (2)
  o 3-5 years (3)
  o 6+ years (4)

Q6 Please select the pronouns you use.
  1. She/her/hers (1)
  2. He/him/his (2)
3. They/Them/Theirs (3)

4. Not Listed (4)

Q8 What is your race? Select all that apply.
   5. American Indian or Alaska Native (1)
   6. Asian (2)
   7. Black or African American (3)
   8. Hispanic/Latino (4)
   9. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)
   10. White (6)
   11. Prefer not to say (7)
   12. Other - Write In: (8) __________________________________________

Q7 What is your gender identity?
   o Man (1)
     o Nonbinary (2)
     o Transgender (3)
     o Woman (13)
     o Another gender identity not listed (14)

Q10 What is your email address?


Q12 Thank you for considering to participation. If you change your mind, please contact me at qiana.wallace@cgu.edu and I will re-send the link.
### Appendix E Codes & Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a. Institutional Researchers Roles and Context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b. Research Analyst</td>
<td>Is a research analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c. Senior Research Analyst</td>
<td>Is a senior research analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1d. Research Director</td>
<td>Is a Director for Research or Institutional Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1e. Dean of Institutional Research</td>
<td>Is the dean of Institutional Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1f. Dean of Institutional Effectiveness</td>
<td>Is the dean of Institutional Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1g. IR Equity</td>
<td>Was hired specifically for equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1h. Previous Role</td>
<td>The previous roles IR had before the one they are currently in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1i. Office Structure</td>
<td>IR describe the structure of their office/team composition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1j. Role is other type of role</td>
<td>IR describe their role outside of academia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1k. Director of IE</td>
<td>IR describe how they are director of institutional research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Role Length</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a. Less than 1</td>
<td>Has been in this role less than one year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b. Less than 5</td>
<td>Has served in their role more than 1 and less than five years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c. Less than 10</td>
<td>Has served in their role more 5 or more years but less than ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2d. More than 10</td>
<td>Has served in their role ten years or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Role Evolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a. Role not evolved</td>
<td>Their role has not evolved at their current institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b. Role expanded</td>
<td>Their role has expanded at their current institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c. New position</td>
<td>They are serving in a new position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3d. Role evolve other</td>
<td>Their role has evolved at other institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3e. Compliance Reporting</td>
<td>Their role includes compliance reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3f. Data requests</td>
<td>Responds to individual data requests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3g. Data dashboards</td>
<td>Creates data dashboards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3h. Dept presentations</td>
<td>Offers departmental presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3i. Faculty partner</td>
<td>Works with faculty to use their data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3j. Student Services partner</td>
<td>Works with student services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3k. Data literacy training</td>
<td>Offers data literacy training for offices across campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3l. Program Review</td>
<td>Plays a role in program review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3m. Works C-Suite</td>
<td>Works with C-’Suite administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3n. Works Other Partners</td>
<td>Works with off campus partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3o. Other Role</td>
<td>Serves in a role outside of the office of institutional research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3p. Methods Used</td>
<td>IR describe methods used in their offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mission Statement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4b. Office Mission Some Equity</td>
<td>The mission statement of the office includes equity but does not sufficiently address it to their expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4a. Office Mission Equity</td>
<td>The mission statement of the office includes equity explicitly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4c. Office Mission No Equity</td>
<td>The mission statement of the office does not include equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4d. College Mission Equity</td>
<td>The mission statement of the college includes equity explicitly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4e. College Mission No Equity</td>
<td>The mission statement of the college does not include equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4f. Office Mission Shifts</td>
<td>Specific shifts in mission of office of IR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4g. College Mission Shifts</td>
<td>Specific shifts in mission of college</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. System and District Focus on Equity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5a. System New Data</th>
<th>The system focus on equity gives them access to more or new data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5b. System Increased Leadership</td>
<td>The system’s focus on equity helped bring leadership on board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5c. System New Reports</td>
<td>The system’s focus on equity created new reports for colleges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5d. System Workload</td>
<td>The system focuses on equity increased their workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5e. System Increased Buy-in</td>
<td>The system’s focus on equity helped to increase buy-in in general on their campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5f. System Resistance</td>
<td>The system’s focus on equity increased resistance from some people on their campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5g. System Initiatives</td>
<td>The system’s focus on equity felt like just another initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5h. System Funding</td>
<td>The system’s focus on equity brought funding to their campus to support their equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5i. System Policy GP</td>
<td>The system’s Guided Pathways initiative has impacted their equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5j. System Policy</td>
<td>They are aligning their equity and Guided Pathways plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5k. System Committees</td>
<td>The system focus is pushing their campus to align all of their equity related initiatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5l. System Challenge Data</td>
<td>The system focus on equity has presented new data challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5m. System Sustainability</td>
<td>The system focus on equity does not feel sustainable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5n. System Validation</td>
<td>The system focuses on equity validated the work they were already doing on their campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5o. System Other</td>
<td>Other impacts of system changes on equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5p. Specific Policy</td>
<td>IR describe specific system policies that have impacted their work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Pandemic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6a. Pandemic Online</th>
<th>The pandemic facilitated the transition to online coursework which was better for many students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6b. Pandemic Social Justice</td>
<td>Pandemic made people more aware about equity issues and buy-in to their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6c. Pandemic Enrollment Decline</td>
<td>Pandemic led to a decline in enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6d. Pandemic Enrollment Boost</td>
<td>Pandemic led to a boost in enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6e. Pandemic IR Online Work</td>
<td>Pandemic created a space for IR to work remotely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6f. Pandemic IR Return to office</td>
<td>Now that pandemic is over, IR are returning to office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6g. Pandemic Relationships Hard</td>
<td>Pandemic made it harder to build relationships across campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6h. Pandemic Relationships Easy</td>
<td>The pandemic made it easier to build relationships across campus because of remote access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6i. Pandemic In-Instruction</td>
<td>Post pandemic return to in-person instruction is hard for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6j. Pandemic in Person Instruction</td>
<td>College is returning to in-person instruction, but data does not suggest that is what is best for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6k. Pandemic Other</td>
<td>Other impacts of the pandemic on college equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Experiences Across Campus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7a. Student Services Progress Data</td>
<td>IR describe ways they have achieved success with student services data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7b. Student Services Progress Relationships</td>
<td>IR describe ways they have achieved success with student services relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7c. Academic Department Progress</td>
<td>IR describe progress they have made with academic departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7d. Academic Department Barriers</td>
<td>IR describe the barriers they face with academic departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7e. Faculty Progress PD</td>
<td>IR describe progress with faculty through professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7f. Faculty Progress Relationships</td>
<td>IR describe how the relationships they have built with faculty have helped advance their equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7g. Faculty Barriers Instruction</td>
<td>IR describe the barriers they have encountered when they shared data with faculty related to their course sections and equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7h. Faculty Barriers SES</td>
<td>IR describe barriers in working with faculty who believe that the issue must be SES, not race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7i. Faculty Barriers Rigor</td>
<td>IR describe barriers with faculty who believe that student failure in their sections is a positive thing because their course is rigorous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7j. Faculty Barriers Equity</td>
<td>IR describe barriers with faculty who are resistant to focusing on racial equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7k. Faculty Barriers Other</td>
<td>Other barriers IR have encountered with faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7l. Progress Other</td>
<td>Other areas of progress not identified other categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7m. Barrier Other</td>
<td>Other barriers not identified in other categories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7n. Overcoming Student Services</td>
<td>How IR are departments overcoming barriers with student services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7o. Overcoming Faculty</td>
<td>How IR are overcoming barriers with faculty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7p. Overcoming Academic Departments</td>
<td>How IR are overcoming barriers with academic departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7q. IR Funding</td>
<td>IR offices describes difficulty with funding their work on their college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7r. Leadership barriers</td>
<td>Campus senior leadership does not support the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Personal Equity Journey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8a. Personal Background</td>
<td>IR describe how their personal background contributed to their journey towards supporting equitable outcomes. (lifelong)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8b. Educational Background</td>
<td>IR describe how their educational background contributed to their journey towards supporting equitable outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8c. Education Academic Training</td>
<td>IR describe how they received specific academic training that contributed to their journey towards supporting equitable outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8d. IR Supervisor</td>
<td>IR described how their supervisor's focus on equity pushed them towards doing this equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8e. IR Supervisor No Equity</td>
<td>IR describe how their supervisor's lack of focus or support for equity drove them towards doing the equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8f. IR Office No Support</td>
<td>IR shared how the lack of support for equity work in their office drove them towards wanting to focus on equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8g. IR Reading</td>
<td>IR shared how they read things that helped them on their journey to supporting equitable outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8h. RP Group'-Webinars</td>
<td>IR shared how attending the RP group webinars contributed to their journey towards supporting equitable outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8i. RP Group Conferences</td>
<td>IR shared how attending the RP group conferences supported them on their journey towards using data to support equitable outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8j. IR Conferences</td>
<td>IR shared how attending other conferences supported them on their equity journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8k. RP Group List Servs</td>
<td>IR shared how the information they received on the RP group listservs have contributed to their ability to support equitable outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8l. Group Peers</td>
<td>IR shared how general support from their peers contributed to their ability to support equitable outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8m. Group Peers POC</td>
<td>IR shared how general support from their peers who are POC contributed to their ability to support equitable outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8n. C-Suite Support</td>
<td>IR shared how C'-Suite level leadership related to equity has contributed to their ability to support equitable outcomes in their personal equity journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8o. Leadership Transition</td>
<td>IR shared how transitions in their institution’s leadership contributed to their ability to support equitable outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8p. System Support</td>
<td>IR shared how the system’s support of equity work has helped them on their personal equity journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8q. IR Office Discrimination</td>
<td>IR shared stories of discrimination they experienced in their own office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8r. IR Responsibility</td>
<td>IR describe how they believe they (personal and their institution) are responsible for addressing inequity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8s. IR Lessons</td>
<td>IR shared lessons learned on their journey to support equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8t. Campus Racism</td>
<td>IR shared stories of racism they encountered on their campus while learning or doing their equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8u. Supportive supervisor</td>
<td>IR describe how their supervisors have been supportive of their equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8v. Other journey support</td>
<td>other supports that have helped people on their equity journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8x. Professional Background</td>
<td>IR share how their professional background prepared them for IR/IE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. IR practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9b. Systemic Racism</td>
<td>IR describes racism as systemic rather than based on individual attribute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9c. Evidence Reliance</td>
<td>IR describe how they are using the evidence to drive their practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9d. IR Action</td>
<td>IR describes how they feel compelled to act or share data related to equity issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9e. Data Sharing</td>
<td>IR describe data sharing practices they use to support their work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9f. Relationships</td>
<td>IR share the specific relationship building work they do that they believe is important for equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9g. Disaggregation</td>
<td>IR share how they approach data disaggregation in their equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9h. Dashboards</td>
<td>IR describe how they are using dashboards to support equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9i. Data literacy</td>
<td>IR share how they are supporting data literacy related to equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9j. Qualitative Data</td>
<td>IR share how they are using qualitative data to support equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9k. Other Practices</td>
<td>IR shared other practices they engaged in to advance their equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Growth in Equity Work</td>
<td>IR describe learning opportunities they currently available - webinars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10a. RP Webinars</td>
<td>IR describe learning opportunities they currently available - RP conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10b. RP Conferences</td>
<td>IR share that they use the RP listservs that help them grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10c. RP Listservs</td>
<td>IR share other RP supports that are helping them grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10d. RP Other</td>
<td>IR describe their participation in USC CUE activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10e. USCCUEPD</td>
<td>IR perspective on the structures of PD that are most engaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10f. PD Structure</td>
<td>IR share their desired PD content to help them grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10g. PD Content</td>
<td>IR share where they would like for PD to focus to help them grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10i. Other Webinar</td>
<td>IR share other webinars that are helping them grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10j. Other Conference</td>
<td>IR share other conferences that are helping them grow in their equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10k. Other</td>
<td>Other areas IR would like to grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Motivation</td>
<td>IR describe how they are motivated by students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11a. Students</td>
<td>IR describe how they are motivated by continuing to learn or improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11b. Continuing to Learn</td>
<td>IR describe how they are motivated by seeing progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11c. Seeing Progress</td>
<td>IR describe the way the shift they are seeing in the system are motivating them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11d. System Shifts</td>
<td>IR describe the way shifts at their college are impacting their motivation to support equitable student outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11e. College Shifts</td>
<td>IR describes the way that their personal passion for equity is what motivates them to engage in work to support equitable student outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11f. Personal Passion</td>
<td>IR share other factors that have motivated them to support equitable student outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11g. Other Motivation</td>
<td>IR share how their peers (in offices) help them sustain their motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11i. Peers of Color</td>
<td>IT share how their peers who are POC help them sustain their motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. New Skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12a. Interpersonal Skills</td>
<td>IR describe the specific interpersonal skills needed to support their equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12b. Research Methods</td>
<td>IR describes the type of research methods training needed to support data equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12c. College Student Theory</td>
<td>IR describe the type of skills related to student development that are connected to their equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12d. Teaching</td>
<td>IR describe the way their skills from teaching translate into their equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12e. Other Skills</td>
<td>IR describe other skills that are needed to support their equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12f. Relationship Building</td>
<td>IR describe their skills in building relationships that were necessary to advance their equity work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12g. Self-Care</td>
<td>IR describe the importance of self-care and boundaries in this work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>