Experiences of Tenured Hispanic Faculty in Community College Hispanic Serving Institutions

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EXPERIENCES OF TENURED HISPANIC FACULTY IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE
HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTIONS

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

Over the past 20 years, student and faculty diversity in higher education has increased, but not at similar rates. Student diversity in higher education has surpassed faculty diversity and leaves a situation in which predominantly White faculty instruct a largely non-White student population. Studies have shown tenured and tenure track faculty of color (FOC) in predominantly White institutions (PWIs) often encounter a myriad of negative experiences such as microaggressions, perceived incapability, invalidation of published work, and lack of mentorship. We know little, however, about how tenured and tenure track Hispanic FOC experience higher education in two-year community college Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in California where representation among students of color and FOC is greater. We also know little about how their experiences affect their sense of belonging.

This qualitative study explored factors that challenged and supported the experiences of tenured Hispanic faculty in nine California community college HSIs. Thirteen tenured faculty were interviewed to understand specifically how representation of Hispanic FOC and structural and cultural factors influenced their sense of belonging.

This study indicates that it was extremely important for Hispanic faculty to make connections with other Hispanic and non-Hispanic FOC to feel a sense of belonging. They made those connections, however, with individuals inside and outside the college. Moreover, rather than representation of FOC being the primary factor, it was the specific actions taken by administrators, faculty, staff, and students to recognize and support them that affected the extent to which they felt valued and accepted. When there was a caring and supportive tenure process, formal practices of recognition, and resources available to support their professional growth, these Hispanic tenured faculty felt they belonged. They felt marginalized however when events
caused them to feel they were expected to fit the prototype of White faculty or when administrators and faculty did not do more to hire other FOC.

This study offers new directions for leaders who are focused on attracting, hiring, and retaining FOC. Challenging status quo practices are imperative in eradicating harmful institutional practices that detract from the experiences of faculty of color and their sense of belonging.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my late brother, Stephen Michael Thompson.

(10/11/1982 – 05/07/2022)
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Faculty of color (FOC) experiences in higher education have largely been studied in four-year predominantly White institutions (PWIs) in the United States to show supports and challenges faced by FOC in spaces where, historically, they have been underrepresented. Higher education research has clearly shown FOC experiences in PWIs are fraught with problems such as discrimination and isolation, which create challenges for organizations to retain FOC. However, there is an overall lack of research regarding how FOC navigate colleges other than four-year PWIs, as well as consideration for how FOC understand factors impacting their sense of belonging. This research aims to identify how one group of Hispanic FOC understand their sense of belonging in California community college Hispanic Serving Institutions. This chapter will provide background information, identify the research problem, research aims, significance of the study, and a brief overview of what to expect in each chapter.

Background

Higher education institutions in the United States continue to struggle in creating a diverse tenured and tenure track faculty who are representative of the larger student population. According to Taylor et al. (2010), local and national programs have increasingly focused on equity in higher education since the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, but the “national report card on accomplishments remains unacceptably poor” (p. 15). The American Council of Education (2019) reported that “between 1996 and 2016, the non-White share of undergraduates grew from 29.6 percent to 45.2 percent, and the non-White share of graduate students grew from 20.8 percent to 32.0 percent” (p. 13). At the same time, the majority of faculty remain White. The U.S. Department of Education’s National Center for Education Statistics (2020) reports that,
in 2018, only approximately 15% of the nation’s full-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions were persons of color. Consequently, higher education faculty do not mirror the student demographic in the United States. This is important because it shows significant challenges exist to attract, hire, and retain FOC in higher education spaces. The next section provides a brief overview of the contributions and benefits FOC bring to college campuses, but especially to an increasingly diverse student body.

Studies have shown that when faculty of color are present on college campuses, they help minimize negative experiences for students of color. Students of color enrolled in colleges where they are represented by faculty of color from similar ethnic/racial backgrounds has proven beneficial for students’ success. According to Umbach (2006), faculty of color interact with students, utilize active and collaborative learning techniques, emphasize higher order cognitive experiences, and engage students in diversity related activities more frequently than White faculty. Additionally, faculty of color offer different perspectives to enhance teaching and learning, as well as contribute to the development of future scholarship (Turner, 2003). Finally, studies show dropout rates decline, grade performance is enhanced, and retention and degree completion rates are strengthened when faculty racial/ethnic backgrounds match those of students (Fairlie et al., 2014). The benefits of having faculty of color representative of students of color on college campuses is important, yet there is still tremendous difficulty increasing faculty diversity in higher education nationwide. The following section provides insight as to why increasing FOC diversity is challenging based on FOC experiences in PWIs. Additionally, it sheds light on the need for studies about FOC experiences in colleges other than PWIs to better understand whether representation among FOC is influencing their experiences any differently from PWIs.
Faculty of Color Experiences in Predominantly White Institutions

FOC experiences are often explained in the context of PWIs. It is important to note that, while PWIs are frequently referenced in the literature, the term *predominantly White institution* is not federally recognized and instead, is used to describe colleges where “more white students are enrolled at the institution than are students who are members of underrepresented racial groups” (Bourke, 2016). While the label *predominantly White institution* strictly references college enrollment numbers for White versus non-White students, this simplistic definition ignores other facets of PWIs that have the potential to impact students, faculty, and staff. Bourke (2016) underscores the extent to which institutional practices in PWIs are embedded in Whiteness, which create multi-layered challenges for underrepresented groups such as feeling alienated, withdrawing from interactions outside of their subculture, self-segregation, and difficulty feeling a sense of belonging within the organization. The historical and cultural facets of PWIs have proven challenging for persons of color and are the most studied areas regarding tenured and tenure track FOC experiences. However, literature on FOC experiences in PWIs rarely account for FOC’s sense of belonging.

Some studies have focused on FOC experiences on four-year PWI campuses using campus racial climate surveys to help identify and address areas of concern for faculty and staff members of color in PWIs. Quantitative and mixed methods approaches provide colleges a quick and efficient method for capturing a snapshot of the campus climate in a short period of time and in using mixed methods, can allow easy follow-up with interviews. It is important to note however, that climate studies have not always provided helpful information in knowing how faculty’s sense of belonging is impacted, as well as providing information representative of minority racial groups on campuses. Obtaining information representative of the majority racial
group can distort the campus racial climate realities for minority racial groups simply because surveys act as a numbers game. In other words, if 76% of faculty indicate the campus racial climate is positive and 90% of the faculty are part of the majority racial group, this could mask the realities for those in the minority racial group. To address this within group variation issue greater use of qualitative research methods can be used such as in-depth interviews, where participants explain how they make meaning of situations related to campus racial climate. However, since interviews typically require a considerable time investment, campus climate studies seldom rely solely on qualitative methods to understand campus racial climate (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). The following section provides an overview of how qualitative studies about FOC in four-year PWIs provide a more detailed account of their experiences, which are overwhelmingly negative.

Higher education spaces are shaped by an institution’s history and values, which influence—either positively or negatively—faculty members’ experiences. Studies of PWIs show tenured and tenure track faculty of color generally experience hostile campus climates, where discrimination and racism take form through micro and macro-aggressions (Fries-Britt et al., 2011; Writer & Watson, 2019). Even when PWIs assert diversity initiatives, faculty of color are expected to lead such areas and provide minority representation. Settles et al. (2018) found faculty of color who were hypervisibilized in diversity work, felt tokenized by the university, and ultimately overburdened by their additional race and diversity responsibilities. Hypervisibility refers to individuals being scrutinized for their ‘otherness’ or deviance from the norm (Settles et al., 2018). Kelly et al. (2017) demonstrated that, while PWIs heavily recruit Black faculty, each faculty member must continue to prove their qualifications for the position, but without any institutional support or mentorship. Faculty of color perceive epistemic exclusion or being
deemed as illegitimate members of the academy, which negatively impacts judgements about the quality of their scholarship (Dotson, 2012; Settles et al., 2020). Faculty of color also face challenges from students in the classroom regarding teaching ability. Maynard and Watts (2006) note faculty of color felt it was important to provide adequate academic content, as well as entertainment (i.e., PowerPoint presentations) to gain approval from students. Four-year PWIs pose a difficult landscape for tenured and tenure track FOC to navigate, often resulting in forms of marginalization and isolation which Strayhorn (2019) identifies as the opposite of belonging. This leaves questions about what factors are influencing FOC’s sense of belonging so they are able to thrive rather than merely survive in four-year PWIs.

Although most literature reflecting tenured and tenure track faculty of color experiences is conducted at four-year PWIs, some literature exists on faculty of color experiences at two-year colleges. Like four-year PWIs, two-year colleges largely reflect a predominantly White faculty population while the student body increasingly diversifies, impacting the overall experience of both students and tenured and tenure track faculty of color (Davis & Fry, 2019; Fairlie et al., 2014). However, some differences among two-year and four-year colleges impact decision-making among faculty of color to pursue tenure track or tenured positions at two-year colleges over four-year colleges. For example, faculty of color are attracted to two-year colleges because they can prioritize teaching over publishing and can work more closely with increasingly diverse student populations (Finley & Kinslow, 2016; Manzo, 2000). These reasons result in some two-year colleges having greater representation among FOC and students of color simultaneously.

One example of two-year colleges where greater faculty and student representation can be found are Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). Tending to FOC experiences in two-year Hispanic Serving Institutions can provide a context with greater FOC representation to
understand FOC experiences in higher education. Additionally, it provides an opportunity to understand how greater representation among FOC may influence their sense of belonging. In the next section, background information on California community college HSIs is discussed to demonstrate how these campuses are different from PWIs and thus, provide greater opportunity to understand FOC experiences in colleges where faculty diversity is greater than PWIs.

Diversity in California Community College Hispanic Serving Institutions

Racial and ethnic demographics have been shifting nationally for some time, but dramatic shifts have taken place more recently. One example is the shift in Hispanic/Latino populations and White populations throughout the United States. In 2019, U.S. demographic data revealed the White population share in the United States declined by about 9 percentage points to 60.1%, while Hispanic/Latino population shares had the most gains from 12.6 to 18.5% (Frey, 2020). Half of U.S. Hispanics live in Southwest border states such as, California, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico (Krogstad, 2020). In 2019, California led all other states with the highest Hispanic/Latino population at 15.6 million (Krogstad, 2020). According to data collected from the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau, the Hispanic/Latino population became the largest racial/ethnic group in California at 39.4%, while the White population was only 34.7% (Jensen et al., 2021).

This shift in demographics from a majority White population to a majority Hispanic population has translated into changes for many California colleges becoming designated Hispanic Serving Institutions. Hispanic Serving Institutions are typically defined as two-year or four-year, degree accredited, non-profit colleges that enroll at least 25% undergraduate Hispanic students (Santiago, 2006). A recent report by Excelencia in Education (n.d.) found that in 2018-2019 California had 176 HSIs, “the largest number of HSIs amongst all states and locations” (p. 2). The increase of HSIs in California is a direct response to the distinct needs of Hispanic and
Latino students. Hispanic Serving Institutions aim to support Hispanic and Latino students by providing additional resources that support their college journey, which ultimately leads to graduation. HSIs receiving grant funding can “expand educational opportunities for; and improve the academic attainment of Hispanic students,” as well as, “expand and enhance the academic offerings, program quality, and institutional stability of the colleges and universities that educate the majority of Hispanic students” (U.S. Department of Education, Section 5).

While there are a large number of Hispanic Serving Institutions in California, most Hispanic/Latino students are more likely to be enrolled in two-year community college HSIs than four-year university HSIs due to various factors such as, limited resources for college preparation, academic preparation, and higher costs of attending private institutions (Núñez et al., 2013). While these figures demonstrate greater student diversity than PWIs, Perna and colleagues (2010) have noted that HSIs also tend to see better representation of Hispanic faculty and administrators due to their motivations for wanting to work with more diverse student populations. However, few studies have been conducted in two-year HSI colleges about the experiences of tenured Hispanic faculty and how those experiences may vary depending on the ethnic/racial representativeness among faculty and students. Additionally, studies outside of four-year PWIs have not accounted for factors that impact FOC’s sense of belonging on college campuses with greater FOC representation.

Summary

Studies about tenured and tenure track FOC experiences at PWIs have shown, in general, how low racial/ethnic representation among FOC and students creates an environment that is isolating, hostile, and difficult to navigate for FOC. Furthermore, studies about FOC at PWIs have shown the need to address the negative environment often encountered by FOC but fail to
inquire about factors that impact FOC’s sense of belonging. Most articles about the negative experiences among faculty of color in PWIs point to an even greater need to understand how historically minoritized faculty experience higher education when they are situated as a group with greater representation among all faculty members, as well as understanding what influences their sense of belonging. To date however, few studies have looked at the experiences of faculty of color where there is greater representation among faculty, such as at two-year HSIs. Additionally, a dearth of literature exists on FOC’s sense of belonging in college environments, which leaves questions about other potential areas that may be impacting their experiences.

**Problem Statement**

The literature on FOC experiences in higher education tells us FOC are underrepresented and needed to serve a growing diverse student population. Additionally, we know little about how to integrate or make FOC feel a sense of belonging. For example, in an article that reviewed and synthesized over 250 publications on faculty of color experiences in PWIs, Turner et al. (2008) found an overall negative impact on faculty of color. Recent literature indicates similar findings. Faculty of color report struggling with chilly campus racial climates, being overburdened with the responsibility of diversity-focused work, experiencing a lack mentorship, seeing their published work devalued, and having their teaching ability grossly underestimated (Flaherty, 2020; Fries-Britt et al., 2011; Kelly et al., 2017; Settles et al., 2020; Writer & Watson, 2019). Demographic changes where racial/ethnic minority students are no longer underrepresented on college campuses makes it even more important to understand how greater FOC representation impacts FOC’s experience, as well as factors contributing to or detracting from their sense of belonging.
Purpose of the Study

Studies exploring the experiences of tenured and tenure track faculty of color in college settings have largely been done in four-year educational spaces where the majority of tenure track and tenured faculty population is White. With diversity increasing throughout the United States, there is a need to better understand how the relationship of ethnic/racial representation among students and faculty influence the experiences of faculty of color. The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of tenured Hispanic faculty in two-year HSI community colleges reflecting greater racial/ethnic representation among Hispanic faculty than is found in PWIs, as well as understand factors influencing Hispanic faculty’s sense of belonging. This work is important because it will contribute to the limited body of knowledge of tenured faculty of color serving at two-year community college campuses but more importantly, it will examine experiences of faculty of color where greater representation among Hispanic faculty exists, as well as examining factors that influence their sense of belonging. The following research questions guided the study:

1. How does Hispanic faculty representation in Hispanic Serving Institutions influence Hispanic tenured faculty’s sense of belonging?

2. What other factors in Hispanic Serving Institutions influence Hispanic tenured faculty’s sense of belonging?

Summary

Chapter One discussed the purpose of the study and problems with how faculty of color experiences have been studied primarily in four-year PWIs. The chapter included pertinent background information related to demographic changes, leading to an increased number of HSIs in California serving Hispanic students. Additionally, it showed how two-year colleges in
California have more diverse faculty than the national average among all colleges. Furthermore, it highlighted the fact that HSI community colleges more frequently have greater faculty diversity than four-year colleges and thus, are an appropriate starting point for studying FOC experiences where there is greater faculty diversity. This chapter also called attention to the lack of information known about FOC’s sense of belonging, as this area has largely been left out of the literature.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature and highlights the following themes: campus racial climate in higher education, faculty of color experiences in four-year predominantly White institutions, California community college Hispanic Serving Institutions, faculty of color experiences in community college Hispanic Serving Institutions. An overview of sense of belonging and critical race theory are also reviewed.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, White faculty and students have occupied higher education spaces to a greater extent than faculty and students of color. While the number of students reflecting diverse backgrounds has increased overall, the number of tenured faculty from diverse backgrounds remains comparatively low (Poloma, 2014). Representation of faculty of color (FOC) in higher education offers several advantages for institutions working to meet the needs of a diverse student population. Studies show students taught by FOC have increased opportunities to experience diverse curriculum, diversity-related activities, and non-traditional pedagogical approaches (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Gurin et al., 2002; Umbach, 2006). Furthermore, when students of color see themselves represented in a diverse faculty body, they see higher education as a place that legitimizes their presence instead of imposing a sense of displacement (Hagedorn et al., 2007). Majority group White tenured faculty members who have been in the profession for an extensive amount of time benefit from having FOC as their colleagues through exposure to new teaching perspectives and minority group faculty who are just entering the profession also benefit by having access to mentors (Garrison-Wade et al., 2012; Kelly et al., 2017). Improving efforts to increase faculty diversity on college campuses has become a major imperative for colleges throughout the United States.

There is reason to believe higher FOC representation on college campuses may translate into more favorable experiences for FOC because previous studies have shown this for historically marginalized students on college campuses. For example, more diverse peer interactions and perceptions of institutional commitment to diversity can act as a buffer against the negative effects of discrimination and bias experienced by students of color in predominantly
White institutions (PWIs), thus improving students’ experiences (Hussain & Jones, 2019). Hagedorn et al. (2007) demonstrated that Latino students in urban community colleges with higher levels of Latino students and faculty experienced greater success than those with lower levels of Latino students and faculty. If students of color have benefited socially and academically in college environments where there are greater numbers of students of color, it follows that FOC in larger numbers on campuses would also benefit similarly. Research indicates challenges faced by FOC with inadequate representation among faculty on various types of college campuses (e.g., Allison, 2008; Levin et al., 2015; Venegas et al., 2021). Research shows FOC who work among majority White faculty often experience feelings of isolation and marginalization on college campuses (see Allison, 2008; Jones et al., 2021; Turner et al., 2008). Although these experiences have been highlighted extensively in the literature, very little attention has been given as to how to address such concerns, other than suggesting increasing diversity could help alleviate such circumstances. A lack of belonging has been demonstrated as important for students of color to improve student retention rates and their commitment towards their college (Jumamil, 2022). To date, however, research has not focused on FOC and their sense of belonging on college campuses, which is problematic when trying to understand how to foster a welcoming and supportive college environment for all. The following sections of this chapter review what is currently known about FOC experiences in higher education in different college settings. This review helps to highlight and distinguish areas in the literature that have been largely ignored regarding FOC experiences.

**Campus Racial Climate in Higher Education**

When seeking to provide healthy and diverse academic environments for students, faculty, and staff, colleges often take stock of how the campus racial climate impacts its
members (Hurtado et al., 1998). The most utilized approach to understand campus racial climate is through collecting and disaggregating data from college campus racial climate surveys. Colleges use these surveys to help reveal areas of strength and weakness to better address issues related to race, ethnicity, and/or gender that ultimately impact all stakeholders (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). The following section explores how college campus racial climate surveys have contributed to colleges obtaining “big picture” information on how race, ethnicity, and gender influence the experiences of faculty and students in their college communities.

Overall, the experiences of persons of color (students, staff, and faculty) in higher education reflect differently from those who are White, and often in ways that are disadvantageous. Peterson and Spencer (1990), define climate as “the current common patterns of important dimensions of organizational life or its members’ perceptions of and attitudes towards those dimensions” (p. 7). There are three dimensions from which organizational climate can be studied: objective climate (behavioral observations), perceived climate (participant perspectives), and psychological climate (participant feelings of the organization and their work) (Peterson & Spencer, 1990). Most colleges seek to understand perceived and psychological climates related to race, based on the long withstanding history of educational spaces being occupied primarily by White populations.

Institutions with a history of predominantly White populations often create challenging and unwelcoming spaces for persons of color. Harper and Hurtado’s (2007) study conducted across five PWIs points out the “need for greater transparency regarding racial realities in learning environments” after identifying nine themes indicating embedded institutionalized problems across PWIs such as, race as an avoidable topic, gaps in social satisfaction by race, reputational legacies for racism, and the pervasiveness of Whiteness in space, curricula, and
activities. Without campuses auditing their racial climate, “racial realities remain undisclosed and unaddressed in systematic ways on college campuses” (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Ancis et al. (2000) found student perceptions of their campus cultural climate varied significantly by race, with White students’ responses reflecting limited perceptions of racial-ethnic tensions. These studies demonstrate how students’ racial identities play a role in their experiences on campus and help point to the need for campuses to address areas that are negatively impacting students.

Campus racial climate has been explored through staff and faculty experiences as well. Boughan (1992) found campus racial climate problems in one community college where White faculty and staff had generally higher levels of satisfaction than non-White employees who had mostly negative perceptions of their experiences on campus. Smith (2004) highlighted the prevalence and severity of negative campus racial climates for Black faculty in PWIs and indicated a number of coping methods needed to combat the “racial battle fatigue” that results from interactions with White students or faculty such as helping faculty explore racial and cultural traditions or connecting them with extended kinship (p. 184). In a similar vein, Jayakumar et al. (2009) demonstrated how a negative racial climate hindered job satisfaction for FOC, yet that same negative racial climate was associated with greater retention of White faculty. These experiences connect to Dickerson’s (2019) discussion of how historically White college institutions’ histories reflect racial segregation and can negatively impact a college’s current climate for persons of color.

Literature suggests that racial conflicts in college campuses are “indicators of a more general problem of unresolved racial issues in college environments and in society at large” (Hurtado, 1992, p. 540). Furthermore, these conflicts are usually not the result of one single element in the college environment and instead, reflect multiple areas interacting together:
external influences (historical and contemporary), structural characteristics of the institution, group relations, and institutionalized ideologies (Hurtado, 1992). This shows the importance for understanding more detailed nuances impacting faculty of color experiences, especially those relating to FOC’s sense of belonging. For this reason, campus climate surveys can be complimented with qualitative interviews that focus not only on how campus climate impacts their experiences, but also how FOC understand it as impacting their sense of belonging.

Studies of campus racial climate often reflect quantitative or mixed methods that provide a general picture of student or faculty satisfaction and focus on gender or race/ethnicity (Hart & Fellabaum 2008). While these methodological approaches provide a general snapshot about the campus racial climate, they do not easily account for individual experiences or situations that impact why participants perceive the racial campus climate in certain ways and what the implications are for the retention of faculty. Moreover, they often do not provide a thorough picture of the experiences of all FOC by group. Climate surveys often do not disaggregate by racial group (frequently because the numbers are so small) and thus, there is little to no information on within group variation. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the experiences of FOC, qualitative interviews need to accompany college campus climate survey results. Qualitative interviews allow for more in-depth answers to questions related to race-related issues.

Faculty of Color Experiences in Four-Year Predominantly White Institutions

FOC experiences in higher education have been studied extensively in four-year colleges, specifically predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (e.g., Allison, 2008; Crayton, 2019; Dade et al., 2015; Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Reddick et al., 2021; Siegel et al., 2015; Turner et al., 2008). The term predominantly White institution (PWI) is not an official designation for any
institution in the United States but is often used to mean an institution where “more White students are enrolled at the institution than are students who are members of underrepresented racial groups” (Bourke, 2016, p. 13). This simple definition of how PWIs are generally interpreted ignores underlying systems and practices rooted in the dominance and normalcy of Whiteness (Wille 2003). Due to practices and policies that support the normalcy of Whiteness in PWIs, a large amount of research has demonstrated persons of color in PWIs have overwhelmingly negative experiences compared to persons who are White. These negative experiences for FOC highlight an overarching challenge in PWIs to sustain positive, healthy environments where FOC can thrive.

Research has shown that FOC on PWI college campuses experience many isolating challenges such as, marginalization, discrimination, and invisibility (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2008). FOC are also challenged more frequently than White faculty on PWI campuses in a number of ways: (a) having their research-related activities undervalued (b) having their credentials and intellect in the classroom challenged and (c) being expected to complete all faculty responsibilities, as well as serve on committees to provide FOC representation (often with only a few other FOC available to divide this extra responsibility, thus increasing FOC workload) (Bernal & Villalpando, 2002; Harris, 2020; Turner et al., 2008). Aside from work-related challenges, FOC also experience challenges related to their appearance such as hairstyle and wardrobe choice, in other words opting to not follow clothing and hairstyles that fit institutional expectations and norms. Instead of presenting as “well-manicured professionals” they often choose to reflect “personal and cultural pride” (Robinson, 2018, p. 118; Sulé, 2011).

While the overall picture at four-year PWIs demonstrates a myriad of problems for FOC, some studies have demonstrated these colleges can take steps to be more supportive of FOC in a
few ways. In one study of racially minoritized faculty at PWIs, Wright-Mair (2017) found those who were “validated and supported proactively by their institutions” felt happier as a faculty member, as well as felt a deeper connection to their institution. Spaces designed specifically for FOC to engage and build community and network with other off-campus FOC were also shown to be helpful. For example, a Facebook group formed for one FOC cohort in higher education revealed how FOC felt it provided a safe space for conversation and connection, but also helped them create “a common discourse that resists, rejects, and redefines the normative professoriate discourse” (Johnson et al., 2018, p. 638). Other factors that support a positive work environment for FOC include professional development programs and research/teaching enhancement programs (Turner et al., 2008). Providing spaces for FOC to feel a sense of connection and community in PWIs has proven challenging but demonstrates these challenges can be addressed to improve FOC’s academic journey.

While information about FOC as the minority in four-year PWIs is useful and needed, it provides an incomplete account of the experiences of tenured and tenure track FOC. This research on FOC experiences in higher education has centered mostly on challenges FOC have encountered in these PWIs and utilized these challenges to support the proposition that more FOC are needed in higher education to assist with improving their college environment. One of the main ideas that stems from this literature about FOC experiences in PWIs, is that greater FOC representation would help improve not only the experiences for students of color, but the experiences for additional FOC who are hired (Abdul-Raheem, 2016). However, little attention has been given to studying FOC experiences where racial and ethnic representation among students and faculty is greater.
California Community College Hispanic Serving Institutions

In 1986, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) called attention to and advocated for higher education institutions serving large numbers of Hispanics, which resulted in the designation of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) (Laden, 2001). Colleges with “an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students” have been designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions and can receive additional funds to help support Hispanic student populations (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). In California, there are approximately 95 community college Hispanic Serving Institutions out of 176 total Hispanic Serving Institutions, representing just over 50% of California HSIs (Excelencia in Education, n.d.). California community college Hispanic Serving Institutions provide important opportunities to study FOC experiences where ethnic and racial representation among students and faculty is greater than four-year PWIs.

While higher education spaces have been occupied predominantly by those who are White, this demographic has changed over time for many community colleges in California. Some of the demographic changes reflecting increased student diversity in community college settings can be linked to many benefits community colleges afford students, that four-year colleges do not. For example, community colleges have an “open-access policy” where there are fewer requirements for admission compared to a four-year college and they cost significantly less than four-year colleges (Finley & Kinslow, 2016). Additionally, the wide array of educational options found in community colleges, from noncredit certificates to bachelor’s degrees provides a significant level of flexibility for “nontraditional” students who are working full-time or are first-generation students whose parent(s) did not complete a four-year college or university degree (Morest, 2013).
To help demonstrate the increase in Hispanic student diversity in California community colleges over time, the Community College Chancellor’s Office shows that from 1999 to 2019 Hispanic versus White student demographics percentages have changed dramatically. In the Fall of 1999, California community colleges enrolled over 1.5 million students, with Hispanics representing 25.36% and Whites representing 41.93% of the student population (California Community College Chancellor’s Office, 2013). Fast-forward 20 years later and we see a major shift in both populations, where Hispanic students represent the majority in comparison to White students. In the Fall of 2019, California community colleges enrolled over 1.1 million students, with Hispanics representing 47.56% and Whites representing 24.11% of the student population (California Community College Chancellor’s Office, 2013). This dramatic demographic change helps explain why Hispanic students currently represent the majority student population in California community colleges.

Due to the large number of Hispanic students served both generally across the United States and more specifically in California community college HSIs, there has been heightened awareness and concern towards increasing faculty diversity to better represent a more diverse student body. A large amount of research has shown that students from diverse backgrounds benefit in many ways when taught by faculty who are racially/ethnically representative of themselves. For example, studies have shown students of color in community colleges perform relatively better, both socially and academically, in classes when instructors are the same race or ethnicity (see Benitez et al., 2017; Fairlie et al., 2014; Hagedorn et al., 2007; Hussain & Jones, 2019). Additionally, faculty of color often employ a broader range of pedagogical techniques and interact more frequently with students than White faculty (Umbach, 2006). However, if a large
number of colleges lack FOC representation for students of color there are many missed opportunities to support students in ways that have proven successful.

The impact FOC have on students of color has been shown as positive and substantial. FOC do not however, adequately represent students of color on college campuses. In 2019, only 6% of full-time faculty in the United States were Hispanic (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). When looking at California community colleges however, this number more than doubles, with Hispanics representing 15% of tenured faculty members (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). This greater representation of FOC makes these campuses excellent sites to examine the experiences of FOC, especially where they have been designated as HSIs because this designation means that the campus is already serving a student population that is 25% or more Hispanic. Although, research on HSIs still indicates this low percentage of Hispanic faculty is problematic for Hispanic students in HSIs and continues to call for an increase in Hispanic faculty in HSIs (see Contreras, 2017; Doran, 2020; Nuñez et al., 2013). Yet, these California community college Hispanic Serving Institutions can provide a different educational context from those found at four-year PWIs to better understand FOC experiences where there is greater FOC representation among Hispanics.

**Faculty of Color Experiences in Community College Hispanic Serving Institutions**

Research on faculty of color experiences in community college Hispanic Serving Institutions is minute, but there are a few studies that provide useful data regarding how faculty of color experience HSI college environments differently from faculty of color in four-year PWIs. Nuñez et al. (2010) identified that one of the benefits for faculty in HSIs was the freedom to explore their cultural background to inform their pedagogical approaches; this allowed FOC to better support students of color and advance educational equity. Conversely, in another study,
one Latina faculty member described the “hidden costs” working in an HSI. This Latina explained how the institution rejected the cultural heritage of its students, had various forms of racial and gender oppression, and used assimilationist curriculum that reinforced White male privilege (B.A.L., 2017). In a similar way, Venegas et al. (2021) found Black and Asian women faculty were among unsupportive microclimates in their HSIs and felt the need for further representation in their HSI. These experiences show that while some benefits are afforded to FOC in HSIs, to date it does not seem that HSIs are creating a space for FOC to thrive significantly better than in four-year PWIs. More research is called for in this area.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Sense of Belonging Literature in Higher Education**

Literature on belonging was used to help provide a theoretical lens in which to explain how factors contributed to or detracted from participants’ sense of belonging. The term *sense of belonging* has been defined by numerous scholars to help describe how individuals relate to their environment. Sense of belonging was first conceptualized as a basic human need (Maslow, 1954). Anant (1966) further added to Maslow’s work by noting belonging is a person’s sense of their experience of personal involvement in a system or environment, to the extent that a person feels themself to be an indispensable and integral part of that system. Anant also noted “belongingness implies recognition and acceptance of a member by the other group members” and that it is not the same as identification because a person could “identify with another person, group, or institution, without that other person, group or institution recognizing or accepting him as part of them” (1966, p. 23). Hagerty et al. (1992) further added to these definitions by noting two other dimensions about belonging: (a) a person feels they have valued involvement or the
experience of feeling valued, needed, and accepted and (b) fit, or the person’s perception that their characteristics complement the system or environment.

In the educational field, sense of belonging has often referred to a student’s perceptions of connection, group membership, and value found in educational contexts (Berger & Milem, 1999; Rhee, 2008). More recently, Strayhorn (2012) defined a sense of belonging as, “students’ perceived social support on campus, a feeling of having a sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty and peers) (p. 3). The following section reviews literature on factors that influenced college students’ sense of belonging.

Previous studies have demonstrated how a positive sense of belonging has been a critical component for undergraduate and graduate student engagement and success in higher education (see Maestas et al., 2007; O’Meara et al., 2017; Pittman & Richmond, 2008). A number of factors have been identified which support historically underrepresented students in higher education and could contribute to students’ sense of belonging such as, learning communities, learning centers (i.e., tutoring centers), student organizations, faculty members, peers, and academic advising (see Freeman, et al., 2007; Habley & McClanahan, 2004; Strayhorn, 2012). Means & Pyne (2017) found “university faculty members were one of the most important variables for [students’] sense of belonging within the academic life of college” (p. 917). They also found “some institutional support structures (e.g., social identity-based student organizations and residential community in one case) provided key sites for disrupting not only societal messages of discrimination, but also students’ own messages of internalized racism, sexism, and classism” (Means & Pyne, 2017, p. 921). Ethnic group cohesion is another factor that positively
influences student of color’s sense of belonging in college settings (Maramba & Museus, 2013). O’Keeffe (2013) pointed to the importance of a strong sense of belonging for improving student retention. Belonging can be enhanced by creating a caring environment that emphasizes positive student/faculty relationships, offers a visible and well-resourced counseling center, and encourages diversity in the college. Strayhorn (2008) argued Latino students’ sense of belonging was one of the benefits Latino students accrued when they attended diverse colleges and interacted with diverse peers (p. 313). Understanding factors that impact a sense belonging among students of color has been crucial in identifying how they are best supported on college campuses and pointing research to ask similar questions regarding faculty of color and their sense of belonging.

With the overwhelming amount of research pointing to negative experiences for FOC in PWIs—feelings of isolation and loneliness—it is important to begin investigating factors contributing to faculty of color’s sense of belonging. With this understanding, more emphasis can be placed on practices that heighten connectedness. To date, a sense of belonging has not been studied extensively for FOC in higher education. One study was found on mentoring relationships that helped foster a sense of belonging for facially minoritized faculty at PWIs (Wright-Mair, 2020). However, this still reflected a PWI college atmosphere where representation for students and faculty of color was low.

**Critical Race Theory**

Critical race theory (CRT) is helpful to understand FOC experiences in higher education settings because it can account for systems and institutional practices impacting how colleges function, which ultimately impact students, staff, faculty, and administrators. CRT stems from the field of critical legal studies and is primarily concerned with addressing racial inequality in
society through the critical analysis of systemic white power and privilege. In the 1970’s, much of the progress made in the civil rights era started to slow and, in some cases, even be reversed, which prompted Derrick Bell, Alan Freeman, and Richard Delgado to spearhead new theories and strategies to combat subtler forms of institutionalized racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). CRT has gradually expanded from the spheres of law into other academic areas such as education, sociology, and women’s studies (Taylor, 1998). CRT was introduced into the field of education almost 25 years ago through the work of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) and continues to be a widely recognized theoretical and analytical tool in educational research. Five tenets within the CRT framework will be used to analyze the interview data of the FOC that are working in HSIs: 1) racism as ordinary 2) interest convergence 3) race as a social construction 4) counter-storytelling and 5) intersectionality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). These concepts informed my understanding of how race may be involved in the experiences of Hispanic tenured faculty. The following sections elaborate on each tenet and their relevance for this study.

**Racism as Ordinary**

CRT acknowledges racism as present in everyday interactions and that individuals of the dominant culture fail to acknowledge its presence, making it difficult to eradicate (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Diggs et al., 2009). CRT asserts the social, political, and economic realms of society are structured in ways that provide benefits to White individuals over people of color (Hiraldo, 2010). DeCuir and Dixson (2004) explain how these structures “allocate the privileging of Whites and the subsequent Othering of people of color in all arenas, including education” (p. 27). Experiences of faculty and students of color encountering racism in educational settings have been well documented and include, but are not limited to racist remarks, death threats, and microaggressions (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Flaherty, 2020; Kelly et al., 2017). The way schools
respond to such instances are indicators of how racism is either perpetuated or challenged, and thus, potentially impact tenured and tenure track FOC’s experiences.

**Interest Convergence**

CRT is useful for understanding the dynamics of racial interactions, as well as how policies and practices systemically impact FOC in higher education. CRT acknowledges Whites as being the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation through interest convergence, which asserts civil rights gains for people of color only occurred to the extent that they converged with the self-interests of Whites (Bell, 1980). For example, in *Brown v. Board of Education* Bell suggests that the ruling was used more to improve the international prestige of the United States with third world countries during the cold war than to provide a moral argument for racial justice (Closson, 2010). Additionally, the major recipients of affirmative action hiring policies have been White women, which ultimately supports households where other Whites live (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Roosevelt, 2015). Therefore, White people are ultimately benefiting from a system that was originally intended to provide equal opportunity to people of color.

In higher education, interest convergence can also be seen through diversity efforts made by schools who recruit international students. Since international students must pay for their education due to ineligibility for government financial aid, colleges, and universities “benefit financially from bringing international diversity to their institution” (Hiraldo, 2010). Interest convergence is an important consideration for understanding FOC experiences because it points to understanding whether procedures and programs exist to promote benefits exclusively for FOC, as opposed to benefiting FOC and White faculty simultaneously.
**Race as Socially Constructed**

CRT calls attention to race as a social construction, which can help attest to power dynamics among racial groups in higher education settings. CRT identifies human interaction as the source and basis for racial categorization (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Bonilla-Silva (2015) asserts that race exists as a vital social category because it forms a racialized hierarchical structure and “social relations’ and ‘practices’ emerge that fit the position of the groups in the racial regime” (p. 75). These hierarchical structures are apparent in higher education with literature consistently pointing to FOC’s experiences being far more negative and challenging than their White peers (Cooke, 2019; Settles et al., 2020; Turner et al., 2008).

Delgado and Stefancic (2000) identify four aspects of race as a social construction: it is produced by humans, integral to the social fabric and includes gender and class relations, its meaning-systems about race change quickly instead of slowly, and they are constructed relationally. The social interactions shaping each race’s conceptualization can impact the benefits or challenges faced by persons in each racial category differently over time. This is especially important to consider when understanding FOC experiences because it accounts for social forces inside and outside of the educational institution that impact the way different racial groups are perceived and therefore, understood and approached.

**Counter-storytelling**

Counter-storytelling is a central CRT approach to this study because it utilizes Hispanic tenured faculty voices to best understand factors contributing to or detracting from their sense of belonging. It places Hispanic voices at the center of the discussion, which is necessary to help dismantle habitual patterns related to racism and assist in its deconstruction (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Writer and Watson (2019), assert the “majoritarian narrative, according to
CRT, is the majoritarian group’s construction of reality that reinforces a tale of its natural superiority to minority groups” (p. 24). To combat the majoritarian narrative, “we participate in creating what we see in the very act of describing it” because our “social and moral realities . . . are indeterminate and subject to interpretation” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000, p. 61). Critical race theory uses counter-storytelling to enable the construction of an alternate reality using the voices of those often targeted for oppression within the educational system.

Counter-storytelling provides a platform where FOC can share their experiences in ways that are not shaped by majority groups, such as those who are White. The goal of counter-storytelling is to bridge the gap of understanding among different racial groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Stories provide those who have historically been without a “voice” the opportunity to share and name experiences of discrimination (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Thus, counter-storytelling will be an integral piece to better understand the experiences of FOC with greater representation in their community college Hispanic Serving Institution campuses than is typically found in colleges nation-wide. FOC experiences have been studied primarily in PWIs, which has created a one-sided narrative in those specific educational spaces. Counter-storytelling can allow FOC in more diverse settings to add to the narrative about how an alternate “reality” may look and how it might be achieved within spaces where FOC have greater representation.

Intersectionality

Hispanic faculty participants are not limited to one identity such as race and therefore, consideration must be given to other social identities participants distinguish as important to their experiences. CRT recognizes race as central to understanding participant experiences, but it also acknowledges that people are not strictly composed of one social category. CRT uses intersectionality to consider race across races and the intersection of race with other identities
and differences (Crenshaw, 1991). Delgado and Stefancic (2017) further note intersectionality as the “examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation and how their combination plays out in various settings” (p. 58). While the focus of this study was to collect and group data according to participant’s racial/ethnic backgrounds, it also accounted for other identities participants felt were salient alongside their race. Recognizing the impact of salient identities can help demonstrate who has “power, voice, and representation” within each space, which is ultimately tied to participants’ perceptions of their experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 62). CRT will be utilized as a lens to examine how other identities intersect with race/ethnicity and impact tenured Hispanic faculty experiences.

This chapter reviewed literature on campus racial climate in higher education to demonstrate how experiences among various racial groups differ and thus, shape their perception of a positive or negative campus racial climate. Additionally, this chapter explained how campus racial climate studies have primarily been done through quantitative or mixed methods approaches, with very few strictly applying qualitative methods which allow for detailed, in-depth participant experiences to be studied. This literature helped show the “big picture” of how FOC on various campuses often perceive their campus racial climate as negative.

To compliment campus racial climate data, qualitative studies were included about FOC experiences in four-year PWIs to help demonstrate challenges which have been most prominent for FOC as well as strategies that have been suggested for addressing these problem areas. These studies demonstrate that most literature for FOC is situated in four-year PWIs and rarely considers how FOC’s sense of belonging is impacted. Very little literature was found on FOC experiences in community college HSIs but was included to show how more research in this area
is needed because it provides a different higher education context, often reflecting greater FOC representation than PWIs.

Literature on sense of belonging was incorporated to show how a significant amount of attention has been given to students in higher education, but not faculty. However, concepts used to address students’ sense of belonging are also useful to understand factors impacting faculty’s sense of belonging because it helps highlight areas that help faculty feel important, valued, and connected. This form of inquiry allows faculty to provide examples that may not necessarily be related to typical supports and challenges found in previous studies.

The five major tenants of critical race theory were used in this study to help make sense of participants’ experiences using race as a central component, but also those identities participants recognized as salient. Counter-storytelling placed Hispanic faculty voices at the center of the study to allow their narratives to stand alone from a historically dominant White narrative. Interest convergence can help call attention to attitudes and practices which seek to ensure White faculty continue to benefit from programs or policies originally meant to support FOC. Acknowledging race as a social construction in higher education spaces can help show how power dynamics function for Hispanic faculty. Finally, viewing racism as ordinary in higher education can help identify, challenge, and possibly change problematic practices that may leave Hispanic faculty feeling a lessened sense of belonging.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study explored the experiences of tenured Hispanic faculty in two-year community colleges designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) located throughout California. This study was necessary to add to the dearth of knowledge about tenured faculty of color (FOC) experiences in colleges other than four-year predominantly White institutions. Examining Hispanic tenured faculty experiences with varying levels of Hispanic representation in their respective colleges can contribute to research on how high and low levels of ethnic and racial representation among faculty in two-year college HSI settings impact Hispanic faculty members’ sense of belonging. This chapter provides detailed information on the qualitative research methodology utilized for this study. The following areas are discussed: research design, study sites, interviewed population, data collection, coding and analysis, ethical considerations, limitations, and summary.

Study Design

A qualitative case study design was used for this study because I was interested in delving deeply into the experiences of Hispanic tenured faculty, as well as understanding what factors they see as contributing to or detracting from their sense of belonging. This qualitative case study design allowed the goals of the study to be reached. It enabled inquiry about specific selected issues in community colleges that impact tenured Hispanic faculty experiences. A qualitative research design allows “careful attention to detail, context and nuance,” and enables a discussion of topics with participants in breadth and depth (Patton, 2015, p. 257). The focus of the study was on two Hispanic faculty groups within particular Hispanic Serving Institutions: one with 25% or more tenured and tenure track faculty; the other with less than 25% tenured and
tenure track faculty. These percentages were the boundary for studying how Hispanic representation impacts their faculty experiences and sense of belonging. Patton noted, “placing a boundary around some phenomenon of interest—and where the boundary is placed is both inevitably arbitrary and fundamentally critical because that boundary—setting process determines what the case is and therefore the focus of inquiry” (Patton, 2015, p. 259).

Initially, I defined the cases as follows: (a) Case 1: two-year HSI community colleges in California serving 25% or more Hispanic/Latino students and having 25% or more Hispanic/Latino tenured and tenure track faculty and (b) Case 2: two-year HSI community colleges in California serving 25% or more Hispanic/Latino students and having less than 25% Hispanic/Latino tenured and tenure track faculty. I aimed to have five to six participants from HSI community colleges with 25% or more Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty and five to six participants from HSI community colleges with fewer than 25% Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty.

After coding and analyzing the data from each case, there were more similarities than differences between Case 1 and Case 2. For example, key themes emerged from both cases that were the same and only presented differences from a few participants whose experiences were nuanced in comparison to the majority of participants. Examples of this included participants from both cases feeling a strong sense of belonging based on factors such as connection with Hispanic and non-Hispanic faculty, as well as noting a structured tenure process as supportive. Participants from both cases also identified similar challenges to their sense of belonging related to hiring faculty of color and fitting in a particular faculty prototype. For these reasons, both cases were combined into one case. I defined this case as two-year HSI community colleges in
California serving 25% or more Hispanic/Latino students with 10% or more Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty.

**Study Sites**

The research was conducted at two-year community colleges designated as HSIs in California. Each institution had varied levels of tenured and tenure-track Hispanic/Latino faculty represented among the faculty in each college. Two-year community college HSIs were chosen because California State Universities (CSUs) and California Community Colleges (CCCs) reflect almost 10% fewer White tenured faculty in each college system than their University of California (UC) counterpart and generally have greater diversity among tenured faculty members than most four-year colleges (The Campaign for College Opportunity, 2018). Furthermore, two-year colleges designated as HSIs must meet a specific requirement to qualify for the HSI designation. These “eligible institutions” “have an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students” (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.).

Since HSI designation required 25% or more of the students to be Hispanic, the original distinction among cases was based on this same percentage for Hispanic/Latino faculty, where they represented 25% or more of tenured and tenure track faculty in one set of HSIs, and less than 25% in other HSIs. These percentages were originally used as the boundaries for each case and the selection of the CCCs in this study. I chose colleges that had 25% or more Hispanic/Latino tenured and tenure track faculty to ensure one group of participants mirrored or exceeded the minimum 25% HSI Hispanic/Latino student population. I also chose colleges that had less than 25% Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty to ensure one group of participants represented less than the 25% HSI Hispanic student population requirement. Although the two
original cases were collapsed into one case, all colleges had more than 10% Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty and thus, have a higher representation than colleges across the United States which in Fall 2020 was six percent (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). All CCCs met the requirements of an HSI and were chosen as research sites based on tenured and tenure track faculty demographic information from the Fall 2021 California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office: Management Information Systems Data Mart (2013) website. Percentages of each racial group within each college met my criteria. For the protection of each institution, pseudonyms were assigned to colleges in this study. The colleges were located in northern, central, and southern areas throughout the state of California.

A list of California community colleges was exported from the Fall 2021 Community College website that indicated the percentage of Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty members within each college. Two additional lists were compiled: (a) one indicating two-year community colleges with 10-24% of Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty within the college and (b) one indicating two-year community colleges with 25% or more of Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty members within each college. I confirmed each community college was an HSI and visited each community college’s website to ensure faculty emails were available publicly.

**Study Participants**

The study participants were selected through comparison-focused purposeful sampling, where participants in each case were chosen with the intent to compare and contrast their experiences and learn about factors that may help explain any similarities and differences across the cases (Patton, 2015). The primary criteria for participation was being a tenured or tenure track Hispanic/Latino faculty for 2 years or more in a two-year community college HSI. The
intention was to obtain a balanced number of Hispanic/Latino faculty from HSIs from various colleges that had different percentages of Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty.

I aimed to compare whether differences and similarities existed in Hispanic faculty participants’ experiences in relationship to their sense of belonging and if these experiences were based on the percentage of Hispanic representation among Hispanic faculty and Hispanic students in HSIs. Therefore, one set of colleges needed a Hispanic faculty body representing less than the 25% Hispanic student population and one set of colleges needed a Hispanic faculty body to reflect 25% or more of the Hispanic student population. Resources available to me were limited, including time to complete the study and ability to provide incentives to participants. For these reasons, 13 participants were interviewed. After interviewing 13 faculty members, I reached data saturation in capturing their experiences. No new information or significant themes emerged after 10 interviews (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016).

The faculty email lists were used to find individuals who identify as Hispanic or Latino by referencing faculty members’ last names. Invitations were sent via email (see Appendix A) to faculty members requesting their participation in the study. Emails were sent to those whose last name appeared to have Hispanic or Latino origins. Additionally, emails were sent to people working in various departments such as, math, science, sociology, counseling, exercise science, English, and foreign language. The criteria for selection included: faculty had to self-identify as Hispanic or Latino, currently serve as a full-time tenured or tenure track faculty member and had been in a tenured or tenure track position for at least two years.

If participants did not meet the necessary criteria, they were asked to forward the email to those who they thought might meet the criteria. Approximately 220 email invitations were sent to prospective participants at approximately 40 different HSI community colleges throughout
California. Seven Hispanic faculty who were tenured at two-year HSIs with less than 25% tenured or tenure track Hispanic faculty agreed to be interviewed. Six Hispanic faculty who were tenured at two-year HSIs with 25% or more tenured and tenure track Hispanic faculty also agreed to be interviewed. When I collapsed the cases, participants in the case study were all Hispanic tenured faculty at community college HSIs that had more than 10% of Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty in their colleges.

**Participant Description**

Thirteen total participants were recruited and interviewed. They were from nine different HSI community colleges. Participants were asked to read, sign, date and return a Consent Form (see Appendix B) to participate in the study via email. The sample size of 13 participants is adequate for the study’s objectives because: (a) saturation was achieved through a diverse body of tenured Hispanic participants (b) the study aimed to identify broad thematic issues related to participants’ sense of belonging, and (c) the study population was a homogenous group. I was not looking for diversity within the Hispanic group. Table 1 shows participant demographic information in relation to their HSI of employment. Participant names, college locations, activities, and any other personal identifiers were removed or replaced with pseudonyms to protect participants’ privacy and ensure confidentiality (Patton, 2015).

**Table 1**

*Participants from California Community College Hispanic Serving Institutions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>Faculty %</th>
<th>Participant Name</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>15-19%</td>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>Latina Chicana</td>
<td>Cisgender Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>Faculty %</td>
<td>Participant Name</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Education Level</td>
<td>Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>15-19%</td>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>Cisgender Female</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Counseling</td>
</tr>
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<td>Male</td>
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<td>Applied Science &amp; Business</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>10-14%</td>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>Mexican American</td>
<td>Cisgender Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
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<td>Master’s</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>Master’s</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Health Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>College</td>
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<td>Participant Name</td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>Social Sciences &amp; History</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This column shows the percentage range for Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty at each institution. A percentage range was used instead of each college’s specific percentage to maintain anonymity for each college.

**Data Collection**

In-depth qualitative interviews were conducted to understand participant experiences. This method allowed for more detailed information from participants’ perspectives than survey data could provide. It also provided a comfortable space for participants to share their stories and experiences without possibly feeling less inclined to tell their stories in a focus-group environment, for example. Interviews were conducted with each faculty member individually via Zoom at a date and time that best coincided with participants’ schedules. Interviews were approximately 50-70 minutes long, audio recorded via audio recorder and Zoom, and transcribed through Zoom or Scribie. To ensure there were no problems with recording the interview, Zoom’s internal recording feature and one high quality interview recorder were used to record each session. Prior to interviewing, I obtained participant consent through a consent form that explained the study topic, research focus, and significance of the study.

Multiple steps were taken to protect human subjects in the study. First, the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of San Diego. Participants who were asked to participate in the study completed a consent form, indicating their understanding that participation was voluntary and could stop at any time the participant deemed necessary. Additionally, the consent form indicated interview participation may elicit negative
emotions or thoughts and provided a local health resource hotline number for participants. All identifying information for participants was removed from transcript documents to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

**Interview Protocol**

The interview protocol (see Appendix C) was adapted from Castillo-Montoya’s (2016) *Preparing for Interview Research: The Interviewer Protocol Refinement Framework*. Each interview with participants started with a concise and clear explanation of the study and the researcher’s interest in hearing participant’s experiences on this subject (Arsel, 2017). An interview protocol was used to ensure participants understood the research project, interview procedures, and were able to ask questions prior to interviews beginning (Arsel, 2017). The interview protocol was used primarily as a guide to ensure all areas of importance were discussed but allowed participants some flexibility to expand or detract from areas they identified as relevant for the purposes of the interview.

**Establishing Rapport**

Prior to conducting interviews, rapport was established with participants by providing some personal background on why the topic was important to me. Additionally, a general statement about my topic of interest was provided. Interviews started with introductory questions related to each participant’s role as a faculty member in their college and how they became part of their community college. From there, participants were asked questions about their experiences related to being a tenured Hispanic faculty member and their sense of belonging at the college. Interviews ended with providing participants the opportunity to share any information they felt was important but had not yet shared. Adjustments were made to the interview guide as interviews were conducted based on answers provided by participants. During
some interviews, participants were asked to expand on certain topics or provide examples. Although few changes were made to the interview protocol, it was treated as an evolving document, where questions or topics were modified to fit the purpose of the study.

**Interview Transcription**

The recorded Zoom session was used to transcribe each interview, except for one interview that was not recorded via Zoom. Instead, the online transcription service Scribie was used to transcribe the interview. The purpose of using the recording feature was to allow the researcher to focus on the content and direction of the interview and later, look back on the transcribed material and notes to identify codes and themes that can be gleaned from each participant’s experiences. Field notes were taken during interviews such as, noting ideas, thoughts, questions, and speculations about information provided by participants and used as a reflective tool for analysis (Glesne, 2016). After data collection, the researcher emailed some participants with questions related to missing demographic information from the initial interview (i.e., age, gender, teaching department, and highest degree obtained), which took no longer than five minutes.

**Data Analysis**

Expanded notes were taken in 24 hours of each interview to note significant factors and additional questions stemming from the initial interview data. Data was prepared for analysis through various coding cycles using both deductive and inductive approaches. Due to the large amounts of information from participant interviews, first cycle coding involved structural coding to initially categorize large amounts of data “to examine comparable segments’ commonalities, differences, and relationships” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 98). Data was organized using question-based codes from the interview guide such as tenure process challenges, tenure process supports,
administrator attitudes supporting sense of belonging, administrator attitudes challenging sense of belonging, times faculty felt they belonged, times faculty felt they didn’t belong (Saldaña, 2016). These categories of data were coded further by identifying examples of each category participants discussed such as, being silenced, supportive mentors, administrator encouragement, administrator neutrality for more faculty of color, Hispanic students support belonging, and micromanagement diminishes belonging. These initial codes prepared data for second cycle coding using thematic analysis.

Second cycle coding involved thematic analysis using inductive strategies such as, active reading, noticing connections and identifying repetition in the codes identified in first cycle coding (Hennink, et al., 2020). Thematic analysis allowed for “interpreting and assigning meaning to a document pattern by giving it a thematic name, a term that connotes and interprets the implications of the pattern” (Patton, 2015, p. 551). The five themes identified were: Connection with Hispanic and non-Hispanic Faculty of Color Fostered a Sense of Belonging, Recognition Supported Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging, Tenure Process Enhanced Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging Through Care and Acceptance, Fitting a Faculty Prototype Challenged Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging, and Faculty of Color Hiring Process Challenged Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging. See Appendix D for a list of sample categories, codes and themes with representative statement samples provided by participants.

I initially constructed two cases for this study: Case One consisted of Hispanic Serving Institutions with less than 25% Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty and Case Two consisted of Hispanic Serving Institutions with 25% or more Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty. I was able to do a comparison of data identifying similarities and differences across participants’ experiences. The results from analyzing each case separately demonstrated far more
similarities than differences in participants’ responses. For this reason, the two cases were combined into one case. Thus, Chapter Four discusses findings in terms of one case: the experiences of Hispanic tenured faculty in two-year community college Hispanic Serving Institutions with 10% or more tenured and tenure track Hispanic faculty.

**Ethical Considerations**

While I had a firm grasp on the issues being studied, great focus was given to being a good listener and conducting the research ethically (Yin, 2018). To be a good listener and avoid being “trapped by existing ideologies and preconceptions,” care was taken to ask participants to offer opposing examples, if available (Yin, 2018, p. 82). Moreover, I asked participants how they apply their own meaning to statements they made. Lastly, I was mindful of being sensitive to contrary evidence posed by participants by considering different angles of the situation the participants described (Yin, 2018).

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness was addressed through attending to data integrity, a balance between reflexivity and subjectivity, and clear communication of findings (Williams & Morrow, 2009). Data integrity was achieved through clear, concise, and thorough descriptions of study procedures. Additionally, clear communication of the findings was achieved by formulating answers to the questions from the study through thick description, which can allow other institutions to determine transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, the researcher debriefed data findings with peers and/or supervisors to assist with providing alternate considerations with how the results are understood and interpreted (Glesne, 2016).
Positionality

During my undergraduate studies in sociology, I became interested in how race, ethnicity and gender impacted people’s lives. More importantly, I became keenly more aware of how my own identities have shaped many of my experiences both positively and negatively. As I entered doctoral school almost 20 years later, I was concerned about how people of color were still extremely underrepresented in colleges; the one place I believed was meant to help further equity among people from all backgrounds. These experiences prompted me to study faculty of color experiences in higher education, specifically factors impacting sense of belonging. I approached this study from an interpretivist lens, where I believe knowledge was derived from how people or groups interpreted their experiences. During data collection, I continuously reminded myself to consider all information shared by participants from multiple angles to minimize my own assumptions about information participants provided.

I am a White cisgender female, which placed me as an outsider with Hispanic participants in terms of race and ethnicity. Being an outsider made it important for me to build rapport with participants prior to interviewing. One way I did this was through thoroughly explaining the study, asking participants if they had any questions about anything prior to the interview, and answering their questions about either the study or myself with transparency. One participant later noted they felt very comfortable during the interview, which was my primary aim as a researcher. My status as a doctoral researcher may have made me an outsider based on educational differences with participants and the fact that I am White; however, I attempted to approach participants as experts of their experiences.

There are some things that made me feel comfortable and more as an insider with Hispanic faculty in community colleges. First, I studied Spanish throughout my undergraduate
studies to the point of near fluency in reading, writing, and speaking. Second, I’ve had many opportunities to visit countries where I needed to communicate in Spanish such as Mexico, Spain, and Costa Rica. Additionally, as a former elementary school teacher I have utilized Spanish to help students whose first language was Spanish to learn English material. In some ways, understanding bilingualism, visiting other countries, and knowing the struggle for people of color to enter higher education spaces as tenured or tenure track faculty allowed me to feel comfortable speaking with participants.

My beliefs about this topic likely aligned with most participants’ beliefs that faculty of color representation is important among tenured and tenure track faculty in higher education systems. Some participants noted their appreciation for the study being completed, as they viewed my work as an allyship. The description I provided prior to interviews may have helped participants feel more comfortable because it was meant to demonstrate my knowledge of how systems of oppression in higher education impact people of color differently (and usually more negatively) than their White colleagues. I am truly grateful and honored to have had the opportunity to hear and learn from the experiences of participants who volunteered to be part of this study.

Study Limitations

Although this study contributed to current literature to better understand tenured Hispanic faculty experiences with varying levels of representation among faculty at two-year HSIs, there are some limitations to consider. First, the study sites were two-year community college HSI campuses that were not demographically representative of many other two-year and four-year colleges in the United States. Although the results are not generalizable, they may assist other colleges in facilitating discussions and taking action around factors that support or challenge
faculty of color, especially as demographic changes continue to take place in different regions. The fact that demographics across the United States are continuously becoming more diverse, calls attention to the need for future studies to take place in similar college contexts, which can help highlight the prevalence or absence of findings from this study. Finally, there was only one researcher and limited time to complete the study which resulted in a sample size of thirteen participants. Even though the sample size was small, each interviewee was given ample time to address each interview question in depth and add to the discussion as they saw appropriate. This contributed to thick description, which is a necessary aim of qualitative research.

**Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology used to explore the experiences of tenured Hispanic faculty in two-year community colleges in California. The purpose of the study was to better understand how representation among Hispanic faculty in HSIs impacts Hispanic faculty experiences. The 13 interviews that were conducted with participants explored structural and cultural challenges in the HSIs, as well as how participants understood their sense of belonging in their colleges. This chapter included a description of the research design, study sites, interviewed population, data collection, coding and analysis, ethical considerations, and limitations. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings of the study by describing the case of Hispanic tenured faculty at Hispanic Serving Institutions, how they perceived Hispanic representation as impacting their sense of belonging as well as other factors Hispanic faculty felt impacted their sense of belonging, both internal and external to their colleges.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Faculty of color (FOC) experiences in college environments have been largely studied in four-year predominantly White institutions (PWIs) i.e., spaces where it is typical for faculty and students of color to be underrepresented. These studies have emphasized an overall negative experience for faculty of color pointing to how they frequently encounter situations filled with microaggressions, a perceived lack of legitimacy from faculty and students, discriminatory hiring practices, and poor experiences during the tenure process (Hirshfield & Joseph, 2008; Turner et al., 2008). Additionally, these studies have demonstrated that faculty of color find it necessary to have mentors, labor organizing bodies, and alliances with other faculty of color to support their success. While understanding FOC experiences in four-year higher education spaces is important to further FOC hiring and retention efforts, it provides only a partial picture of FOC experiences. In particular, studies of four-year colleges and universities normally say virtually nothing about colleges where ethnic and racial representation is greater, e.g., community colleges that are Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs).

The purpose of this exploratory case study was to better understand the experiences of a group of faculty of color, specifically tenured Hispanic faculty members working in various two-year Hispanic Serving Institutions throughout California where representation of faculty of color was greater than what we find in many four-year non-HSI institutions. The intent was to examine how, if at all, ethnic and racial representation among faculty and students impact the faculty of color tenure experiences. The study was designed specifically to better understand challenges and supports HSIs provide to Hispanic tenured faculty that impact their sense of belonging. By better understanding factors impacting Hispanic faculty’s sense of belonging, we can help
reshape practices in colleges and universities to best support them. This information can help create new directions for educational policies related to leadership and inclusion, and practices that affect both faculty and students of color.

This chapter presents themes that emerged through data analysis to address the following research questions:

1. How does Hispanic faculty representation in Hispanic Serving Institutions influence Hispanic tenured faculty’s sense of belonging?
2. What other factors in Hispanic Serving Institutions influence Hispanic tenured faculty’s sense of belonging?

This chapter is organized around five major themes. The majority of participants said connection with Hispanic and non-Hispanic faculty of color fostered a sense of belonging because participants were able to relate more easily to faculty of color. Recognition from students, faculty, staff, and administrators also supported participants’ sense of belonging because those recognized felt their contributions were valued. Most participants also noted the experiences in their tenure process as supportive due to the care and acceptance they felt from others in their college. There were two areas however, which challenged participants sense of belonging. Many participants explained their sense of belonging was challenged when they felt they were not meeting expectations of fitting in a typical White faculty prototype. Additionally, participants’ sense of belonging was challenged when their perspectives with hiring additional faculty of color disagreed with administrators’ perspectives. These five themes are discussed in the following sections.
Case Description

There were thirteen participants from nine California community college Hispanic Serving Institutions. Four colleges had 25% or more Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty. Five colleges had less than 25% Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty. The more typical representation of Hispanic faculty averages about 10% in California (Gordon, 2018). Three community college HSIs were located in three different counties in central California. Six community college HSIs were located in five different counties in southern California. All colleges served a Hispanic student population representing 25% or more of the school’s student population.

Theme 1: Connection with Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Faculty of Color Fostered a Sense of Belonging

Seven of 13 Hispanic faculty participants explained that being able to make connections with Hispanic and non-Hispanic faculty of color within their colleges and thus they developed a sense of belonging. Those who connected with Hispanic faculty inside of their HSI developed their sense of belonging by being able to share similarities in both background and culture with other Hispanic faculty on campus, as well as with non-Hispanic faculty of color (FOC). Because they felt they shared similar experiences with their FOC colleagues due to their background as persons of color, they could create a strong sense of community in which they were all working toward a common goal. Their goals and attitudes were focused on supporting students of color. This created a sense that they belonged at the college, and they belonged together.

Juan, for example, noted feeling connected in his HSI because many faculty and staff members looked like him. He explained there was more attention to celebrating cultural events that aligned with his background. This gave him a sense of belonging. He said,
It's been a very unique experience from other places that I've been, and I do feel like a lot of that has to do with the culture of the campus based on the culture and kind of race and ethnicity of the campus makeup.

Celebrations during the holidays included food from his culture that made him feel “represented” and it was “a huge part” of feeling he belonged.

Julia agreed about the importance of celebrations that honored Hispanic traditions. She no longer felt she was the only Hispanic person at the college. Hispanic celebrations happened frequently at her college, which fostered a welcoming and nurturing environment for both Hispanic faculty and students.

Feeling they belonged also came from being able to work with so many other Hispanic faculty on behalf of Hispanic students because, as Diego explained, when trying to push initiatives forward to support Hispanic students, the Hispanic faculty just “get it”:

I would say, on the one hand, whenever I have an idea for either like a program or an initiative, or something that we can get going on our campus. I find that with my colleagues of color there's less explaining and educating on my part because they get it right away. They're like, ‘Oh, yeah, I get you,’ because many times they have experienced the same hardships and struggles that our students face. And so, I don't need to stop and explain to them like, ‘We need to do this because of this.’ I don't have to give the why.

Diego contrasted this ease in working together with his fellow Hispanic FOC because of their shared background with stories of working with his White colleagues. He said,

It's . . . not so much that they're [White faculty] like unaware of student um, struggles and obstacles. It's more that they might not understand like, how can we go about addressing
them? And they might not necessarily have experienced those things, and so they want to help but you need to offer that explanation to them, so that they get on board, and I think it also affects who gets on board quite frankly.

Ginez also noted that with greater representation of Hispanic faculty on campus there was an ease in making cultural connections with Hispanic colleagues compared to the struggle they had in making connections with the Anglo professors on campus. The ability for Hispanic professors to communicate in Spanish with Hispanic faculty and students created an immediate connection. Ginez noted, “There's a cultural component there that [faculty and Hispanic students] really don't have with [Anglo] professors . . .” This “connection” worked in building camaraderie with Hispanic faculty but also worked to the benefit of the students. They were in alignment with their goal of helping students of color.

Carmen also noted feeling a “connection” not only with Hispanic but also non-Hispanic faculty of color on a campus that has a greater representation of FOC. She explained that “it’s easier to have a relationship with another . . . faculty of color, ‘cause you kind of have gone through similar experiences and we’ll probably continue going through experiences together.” This commonality of experiences as a person of color supported her sense of belonging because it created an environment where she was not isolated in her experiences as a Hispanic faculty member.

Sofia described having a greater sense of community with all faculty of color. These were the faculty who tended to participate in professional development, governance committees, and task forces supporting Blacks, Asians, and Pacific Islanders. She noted the importance of these task forces to help with institutional practices such as hiring, as well as creating strength among all faculty who she feels are “stronger together working together.” Sofia’s sense of community
with other faculty of color was strengthened through having common attitudes and goals when working throughout the college on task forces meant to improve the experiences for faculty of color from various backgrounds. This allowed Sofia to feel a strong sense of belonging because she worked in community with others who believed in a similar mission to support all faculty of color and students of color at their college.

Rosa, who worked remotely, remarked that, although Hispanic faculty continued to be underrepresented in her college, she recognized that their situation was better than at other college campuses. As a result, she was able to become friends with colleagues of color throughout the campus. They could talk about work and their personal lives, which built a strong sense of community.

The majority of Hispanic faculty had a positive sense of belonging due to the connections they made with both Hispanic and non-Hispanic faculty of color in their colleges. However, three additional participants noted that because there were lower percentages of Hispanic and non-Hispanic faculty of color in their colleges, they utilized other ways to make connections and build meaningful relationships with Hispanic and non-Hispanic faculty of color. They formed connections with Hispanic colleagues outside of their colleges, with individuals who worked in nonprofit organizations, or with non-Hispanic colleagues of color outside of their Hispanic Serving Institutions. These connections enabled them to better contextualize and navigate challenging experiences in their HSIs and foster a sense of belonging. Belonging was fostered because they were able to share similar experiences with other persons of color.

Three participants explained that making connections with Hispanic faculty and non-Hispanic faculty of color was important to their sense of belonging at their HSIs, however they also indicated they often found those connections outside their colleges. These participants
turned to Hispanic nonprofit organizations in their respective academic fields, or throughout their community college district to make those connections. External connections helped them feel they belonged at their HSI because they were able to obtain needed support, advice, and tools to confront challenges they faced as faculty of color. When Martina, for example, encountered challenges with the Dean of the college, she explained how reaching out to a Hispanic nonprofit organization helped her:

They gave me scholarships, but more importantly, they've given me the mentorship and the tools that I need in order to be successful . . . Many times I would call my mentors crying like, ‘I can't do this anymore. I don't want to work with these damn white ladies.’ I mean, and I'm sorry to say that, but that's what I would say. You can say what you want to say, and then they would tell me, ‘You know you're there because of your students. Your students look like you. Your students admire you, and you never leave a job for a boss. You leave the job when you feel like you're ready’ . . . and I can't tell you how many times I had to lean on that because there have been moments where I'm like, I'm done. I'm fed up with this. I don't want to deal with this crap. Like, I don't need to.

For Martina, the support she found in this Hispanic nonprofit organization motivated her to remain at her college campus despite difficulties with other White individuals on campus. The advice from Hispanic colleagues helped her not only find connection with those similar to herself, but also allowed her to reframe her experiences in a way that helped her see the value and connection she could bring to Hispanic students in her HSI.

Joaquin also described how relying on scholars of color outside of his organization contributed to his sense of belonging in his college. Joaquin explained that “intellectual engagement and discussions” with Black colleagues outside of his academic spaces had been
very crucial in his ability to “engage and problematize how race plays a role in [his] . . .
institution.” Through these interactions, Joaquin was able to better contextualize his own
experience in his college and this ultimately created a sense of belonging in his college. In fact,
Joaquin mentioned his expertise on topics related to race prompted the college to frequently refer
to him as an expert when addressing race-related issues in the college. The connection
established with non-Hispanic colleagues of color outside of Joaquin’s college facilitated a
greater understanding of how to address institutionalized racism or race-related issues and thus,
enabled Joaquin to contribute to his HSI in a way that supported persons of color and fostered his
sense of belonging to the institution.

Alba noted she had to turn to colleagues external to the college to create her sense of
belonging as a Hispanic woman at her HSI. There were not enough FOC at her college that she
could connect with. When the college put together the annual Latinx celebration with Hispanic
faculty in the district, Alba felt she was better able to connect with Hispanic colleagues, because
in her college she felt like she didn’t have her own team which “felt lonely.” As a result, she
explained that she finds her team with anyone, “whether they're Black, Brown, White, or
anything. I'll go with it if it feels right.” Alba’s experience demonstrates the importance of being
able to connect with Hispanic and non-Hispanic faculty. When Hispanic faculty were lacking on
her college campus, she extended herself outside of the college and formed relationships with
Hispanic faculty throughout her district. Additionally, she formed connections with people from
many different backgrounds who made her feel comfortable. The key point was that she needed
the camaraderie and support from others to make her feel she belonged on the college campus.
Alba and Joaquin demonstrated how connecting with Hispanic or non-Hispanic faculty of color
outside of their colleges helped support their sense of belonging.
These three faculty members, in addition to the seven participants described previously, all needed to connect with Hispanic and non-Hispanic faculty of color. Some, however, given they had fewer FOC at their college, looked externally for those connections that gave them a sense of professional belonging.

**Theme 2: Recognition Supported Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging**

Participants explained how they felt they were viewed as important members of their colleges. This recognition by others influenced their sense of belonging to the institution because it enabled them to feel valued in their colleges. Ten of 13 participants offered examples of how recognition from students, peers, and administrators contributed to a sense of belonging in their HSIs. Examples of these included being offered a tenure-track position, mentored personally and professionally by colleagues, nominated for an award, offered roles with greater responsibility, receiving positive student reviews, and publicly sharing their strengths at training events. Hispanic faculty explained that these forms of recognition made participants feel their ideas, involvement, and uniqueness were respected and valued by administration, faculty, staff, and/or students within the college.

Rosa and Alba explained the significance of being recognized by administrators. They said it allowed them to feel like valued members of the college. Rosa remembered the president being welcoming, sending personal emails, and communicating congratulations to those who passed their first year of tenure, which made Rosa feel they were “happy that [she] was there.” Alba described a similar experience when an administrator appointed her to lead as the interim director of an important student center within the college. Alba stated:
I never felt like I could directly like um, get involved with the . . . center. But I . . . think that's how things shifted because I felt like for the first time I felt um, like I had a real role [with] a real important program.

The appointment gave her a strong sense of belonging. An administrator had respected her abilities and expertise and as a result, she felt she could make important contributions to the students in her college.

Martina also described her sense of belonging in terms of how many opportunities she has been given by administrators to contribute within her department, so much so that she recognized herself as a valuable asset to the college’s Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) program. Her sense of belonging increased as her assignment to various roles and her responsibility increased:

Oh, I’m a staple. I'm a staple at [X] College . . . I have been in the LVN program since I first started and I've done everything. I've taught a lot of the classes. I've been a coordinator. I've been assistant director. Um, I know the program inside and out. Our statistics are amazing. So, I mean not to sound conceited, but I'm definitely a staple . . .

Here, Martina acknowledged how her value not only contributed to the college, but how she was needed in her college (i.e., “I’m a staple”). Her intricate involvement in the LVN program helped to shape the program positively and significantly, which was important for supporting her sense of belonging.

One participant, Ginez, noted how their sense of belonging grew as their ability to increasingly voice opinions among administrators and peers strengthened. Ginez explained being heard and having opinions valued was important. Ginez stated:
As a member of the senior faculty] I'm allowed to have a voice that's that strong. I'm allowed to have opinions. So, when you're able to speak that way . . . when you’re able to speak your mind . . . That's my sense of belonging is . . . it comes from my voice . . . [and receiving the invitation/call to become a member of the tenure-track faculty].

Julia explained her sense of belonging was related to the recognition she received from peers in her college. Her sense of belonging was enhanced when she was asked to contribute to the college’s efforts to provide training to faculty. Initially, she was unsure if she would be able to make a substantial contribution due to having just an associate degree at the time. She was among colleagues with higher levels of education yet, she was encouraged by another faculty member to focus on her strengths in the nursing field. Upon finishing the training and providing flu shots to faculty members, Julia explained that this involvement not only allowed her to be recognized by her peers but also to feel more like she belonged. Having her peers appreciate her contributions and recognizing her for them, led her to feel more a part of the group. Julia remarked:

I would say it's something simple like um . . . when I get a chance to share my strengths teaching CPR [cardiopulmonary resuscitation] to the faculty. I brought a flu shot clinic to our campus, and . . . everybody was like, ‘Oh, my gosh, thank you for doing that. Like, I just came to work and get my flu shot here, and like really appreciate that.’

According to two participants, Diego and Luis, recognition by students and faculty encouraged their sense of belonging. Diego was awarded the All-Time Faculty Member of the Year Award at his college. This award was earned through nominations by faculty, staff, administrators, and students. He stated, “It’s a great way to show, like, ‘Hey, we like the fact that you’re here,’ you know?” Luis explained recognition from both faculty and students was relevant
for his sense of belonging similar to that of Diego, where there was validation in how others perceived them as professionally valuable in their colleges:

The fact that I saw that I had very good reviews from my um peers, from my students. That definitely makes you feel like you belong in that setting . . . Sure uh, just uh one student who wrote, you know, uh ‘The way professor uh teaches his class . . . That's the way all faculty members should be teaching it.’ So that obviously was meaningful.

Recognition was not only in the form of professional acknowledgements, but also in faculty mentors taking a personal interest in participants in respectful ways. Juan explained how his sense of belonging was impacted by having mentors who recognized personal aspects of his life. He said, “So, you know, having mentors and people that were above me [who] look like me and treat me with respect, I think, really helped. [My] personal life connected beyond work.” The ability to connect with mentors beyond strictly work-related discussion contributed to Juan’s feelings of belonging. Juan emphasized the importance of not only being recognized professionally but also being recognized on a personal level.

Being recognized by and connecting with students who were the same ethnicity as themselves was also important in contributing to Hispanic faculty’s sense of belonging in their colleges. Three Hispanic faculty explained they were role models for their Hispanic students. Being able to relate well with Hispanic students who often had similar backgrounds as their own, made them feel recognized and valued. Carmen found connection with Hispanic students because she could empathize with their situations. Carmen understood Hispanic students did not have many professors of color, and she wanted to help fill that void. She wanted Hispanic students to have mentors who looked like themselves. Carmen said:
So, I think [sharing the same ethnicity] that's kind of what led me to wanna be there to be able to help students, guide students, and also just for students to be able to see themselves in me. When I went through my college career, even graduate school, like I don't think I saw too many professors that looked like me.

Carmen’s sense of belonging stemmed from being recognized as a positive Hispanic role model for Hispanic students who felt their experiences did not reflect those of non-Hispanic faculty. Through Carmen’s own college experiences, she understood the significance of not seeing Hispanic faculty on campus. It highlighted even more the need for her to be there and to be a role model for Hispanic students. Carmen felt her presence as a Hispanic faculty member among Hispanic students was also important in helping improve Hispanic students’ feeling of acceptance within their college. For this reason, Carmen also felt an enhanced sense of belonging at her HSI.

Sofia mentioned her sense of belonging also resulted from her interactions with Hispanic students and the recognition she received from them about the importance of her presence on campus. She explained it this way: “I think my students make me feel that way . . . having them open up to me with challenges, offering a snack; connection is why I stay.” The connections built with students was impactful for Sofia. They allowed her to also be recognized as an important role model for them. They sought her out because she could relate to them more easily based on her experiences as a former Hispanic student.

Carlos was impacted by his interactions with students, as well. He felt he was giving back to the same community he was part of as a Hispanic student. His sense of belonging was fostered through moments when students recognized him when they provided positive feedback about him as their instructor and when students came back to talk to him about their successes. Carlos’
experiences as a Hispanic faculty member were validated when he received student feedback. Carlos, like the other faculty in this study, felt when they were recognized for their individuality, opinions, contributions, and accomplishments within the college, it contributed to their sense of belonging.

The next section describes how the majority of participants viewed the tenure process as supportive, and another opportunity to be recognized as important to the college.

**Theme 3: Tenure Process Enhanced Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging Through Care and Acceptance**

The tenure process was similar for the majority of Hispanic faculty. First, the tenure process was approximately four to five years long and participants were appointed four to five committee members who typically consisted of tenured faculty peers and/or mentors (sometimes from another department), dean, and administrator. In many cases, participants explained they were able to choose one of their committee members. Second, Hispanic faculty explained receiving teaching evaluations from peers and students. Third, most participants noted their tenure process provided professional development and networking opportunities. These areas of the tenure process are discussed further in the following section.

Participants provided many examples of times when, through the tenure process, they were recognized positively by peers, administrators, or students. It gave them the feeling that they mattered and were cared about by those in the college. There were also times they were given an award, had respectful mentors reflective of their own culture, were offered opportunities for growth, took on new responsibilities in the college and had colleagues view their work and contributions as valuable for the whole college. The tenure process made them feel academically and socially supported. Participants provided examples of mentorship,
evaluations, ability to choose a committee member, professional development opportunities, and personal feedback as important parts of their tenure process that impacted their sense of belonging positively.

The majority of participants indicated their experiences going through the tenure process allowed them to feel they were an important part of the college system due to various tenure track supports that were in place such as, mentorship, evaluations, ability to choose a committee member, professional development opportunities, and personal feedback. These supportive features of the tenure process enhanced participants’ sense of belonging.

Many participants felt the peer evaluation of teaching process with other faculty members helped them understand their growth trajectory and the progress they were making toward tenure. The process provided participants with important feedback meant to facilitate their professional growth in both pedagogy and content delivery. Feedback enabled participants to know what was expected of them and what corrections were needed. Carlos explained, “If they had some comment to make that was negative, they made sure you know . . . Hey you’re doing this, but don’t worry, we’re gonna get you help to improve. So, there was always positive [feedback].” Sofia echoed this sentiment and while she stated obtaining tenure was “not a fun process,” she maintained she always received positive and valid feedback from her committee members. She viewed her tenure track experience as a process meant to help her grow and be successful as a faculty member.

Julia regarded her tenure track experience as a very involved process consisting of faculty evaluations regarding her performance with load requirements and fulfilling objectives aimed to support students. Obviously, there was some stress in obtaining acceptable student evaluations that would be assessed by her colleagues, but she felt the feedback was designed for her own
professional development as a scholar and teacher. She noted mentors and coworkers were approachable, which was important to her because it made her feel supported and accepted by them. She compared her coworkers and mentors to likable family members, which helped to show how much she belonged:

There's a lot of really supportive educated people there. There's people from all over the world, um, that we have . . . and so I had a lot of great um, mentors and coworkers that you can just go and approach. I mean everybody's just, it's like a big family. So, um I would say I had a lot of resources and a lot of help…

Luis also pointed to the evaluation structures, appropriate communications, and the college’s investment in his training when he spoke about developing a greater sense of belonging. Luis received compensation from the college upon completing necessary training to maintain certifications in his field, which Luis felt was the college's way of not only ensuring all faculty were up to date on certifications, but also showing their investment in new faculty. This led him to feel cared about and accepted. He explained it this way:

Evaluations and appropriate communications . . . That's something that I believe makes instructors or faculty members more successful at what they do. [Support for getting certifications] was quite expensive. They not only paid for the training, but they paid me some additional money for completing that training . . . provided reimbursement for being able to maintain any certifications up to date.

Juan described his tenure track process as very collaborative, encouraging, and supportive. He explained the importance of his mentors who highlighted their roles as coach-like and that the tenure track process was not meant to be punitive. This created a safe environment where Juan felt that even if he made mistakes, the intent was for the tenure committee to help
him progress and improve over time. This all contributed to his sense of feeling he belonged at
the college.

Similarly, Joaquin explained that during his tenure-track process he participated in an
internship with a mentor who was frank about the realities of gaining full-time employment with
a tenure position. His mentor’s frankness is one reason Joaquin decided instead of remaining in a
full-time staff role and being a part-time adjunct faculty member, he decided to extend himself
anywhere he could at various community colleges, which eventually led to a tenure track role.
The ability to discuss the tenure process with a tenured faculty mentor from the college helped
Joaquin understand better how to improve his chances to make that happen.

Carmen said her ability to connect monthly at designated faculty meetings was important
to her navigating the tenure process. These meetings allowed Carmen to obtain positive feedback
and support during the process. Sophia and Carlos also both noted receiving positive support and
feedback from mentors as they navigated the tenure process. However, Sophia also emphasized
that in her process to receive tenure she was able to choose her own professional mentors.
Sophia’s ability to choose her professional mentors made her feel greater acceptance in the
tenure process because she was able to choose mentors she felt would best benefit her, thus
strengthening her sense of belonging during the tenure process.

Professional development opportunities offered by the college were also seen by
participants as a supportive feature of the tenure process. By having access to additional training
and workshops, participants felt they were able to better hone their skills as academic
professionals to meet the demands of their position and ultimately obtain tenure. Carmen and
Sofia both pointed to how the training offered by their college assisted them during the tenure
process. It was during these trainings when they learned more about campus policies and
practices, which made them feel more supported and connected. Carlos mentioned how workshops held twice each year helped him focus on improving his teaching skills and placed him in a better position to achieve tenure.

Rosa had a slightly different experience than Carlos and Sofia. While she was offered two meetings every year during the tenure track process to provide support, she also received “unfavorable feedback” from one faculty member which shook her confidence and challenged the sense of belonging that she had cultivated. The other tenure committee members disagreed with the unfavorable feedback and joined together to let Rosa know that they would support her. These committee members said that if the other member’s negative comments were placed in the report, they would all back her up. In this way, Rosa felt accepted, supported, and cared about.

Overall, feedback, professional development and training opportunities were viewed as valuable and supportive because it demonstrated the college’s investment in them, as well as provided space for them to hone their craft as faculty members. In the tenure track process, features such as regular faculty evaluations, mentorships and professional development opportunities provided structure, stability, and reassurance for participants which enabled them to feel accepted as members of the college. In turn, this allowed their sense of belonging to flourish.

Ginez explained that having the ability to choose a member of the tenure committee was one of the most important parts of the tenure process because it ensured the tenure track faculty member had at least one ally on their committee who already made them feel accepted. Ginez’s trusted ally on the tenure committee team strengthened Ginez’s sense of belonging because Ginez did not feel alone in the process:
So that's one of the ways that they believe the faculty can uh, ensure that they at least have a voice in how they get tenure. That doesn't seem like a big deal, but when you have one of those members in your back corner, and they're going to bat, you know, for you to the Dean, it really helps tip the scales towards the tenure track faculty. So, I think that's a very neat option that they give tenure track faculty. Um, the other one that made it easy along the way is yearly reviews, which is commonplace . . .

Diego and Juan both suggested that they did not face any barriers during their tenure process. Specifically, Diego explained how the process of observations, evaluations by students, reviews by committee members, and the ability to choose one committee member, allowed him to feel very supported.

There was one exception among the majority of participants who disagreed that the tenure process was supportive. Gloria stated, “No, it was just basically welcome to [E] College. And here are your classes and you’ll figure it out.” Gloria mentioned that people were welcoming towards her, but there were no structured supports in place to help with networking or understanding the ins and outs of the faculty track. She later stated that although they have more recently implemented a program that provides mentors and additional networking opportunities for tenure track faculty, there is still more that could be done to support new faculty. While Gloria’s tenure track experience was very different from the majority of participants, her perspective helps highlight just how valuable tenure track supports were for these Hispanic faculty as they attempted to cultivate a sense of belonging.

Misguided Mentorship in Tenure Process Minimized Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging

While most participants experienced their tenure track process as one which fostered their sense of belonging due to feeling cared about or accepted through specific procedures and
protocols implemented in each college, it is important to note the two instances where participants did not feel accepted. These participants mentioned that some comments offered from their mentors were not perceived as positive and instead, detracted from their sense of belonging. They felt they were not being heard; in fact, that they were being “silenced.” There were instances where their mentors discouraged them from speaking out over certain topics related to either students or faculty. In these instances, a caution that may have been well-intentioned mentorship, backfired and detracted from both participants’ sense of belonging because it called their beliefs and opinions into question.

One problematic area Ginez encountered while participating in the governance of the college and obtaining tenure was feeling unable to speak freely about areas of concern and unable to challenge practices within the college. Ginez mentioned how one colleague even had to provide some direction with how and when it would be acceptable to bring up concerns while assisting with college governance:

I just said something that made everyone uncomfortable . . . It’s fine. It’s supposed to be a little uncomfortable, and [my colleague] just told me ‘I appreciate your zeal. But please wait until you have tenure to say stuff like that, because ultimately, the Board will determine whether or not you get tenure.’

Ginez had the support of a direct colleague, but the colleague’s comments detracted from Ginez’s sense of belonging because Ginez felt unheard and not taken seriously by members of the board. After this incident, Ginez requested to only be placed in areas of the college where Ginez wouldn’t have opportunities to voice strong opinions to reduce the chances of further conflict that might arise with board members, which may have negatively impacted Ginez’s ability to receive tenure as well as limit Ginez’s influence on campus.
In a similar vein, Martina stated she was “quieted” during the tenure track process as well when she tried to speak up about ethical concerns regarding another colleague to her mentor:

I did have a mentor, um, during the tenure process. It was more like, ‘Just be quiet and get through things,’ because if things arise that I didn't agree with, I would speak up um, and I think that is cultural. That's definitely, you know. If you see something that's wrong, you need to speak up. So, I did hear that a lot. I would hear, ‘Martina, you're not tenured. You need to be quiet, Martina. You need to do this . . . and I got so tired of hearing that. I was like look, if I'm going to get fired because of my beliefs, then so be it . . . We need to have ethics. So, if something's wrong, I'm going to say something's wrong. And so that's where (another superior colleague) and I really clashed because I think everybody else just kind of put their head down, and just kind of did, whatever the heck she's doing . . . even if it was wrong. And I wouldn't, and I didn't care if I was tenured or not. It's about being . . . ethical, doing things correctly, holding the high standards and just doing my best.

Her comments suggested that while her mentor may have been attempting to provide a form of protection for Martina so she would be able to attain tenure, similar to Ginez’s situation, this imposed silence challenged her sense of identity and ultimately her sense of belonging. Martina and Ginez later stated how their voices and influence strengthened over time, but it was only after receiving tenure when they felt safe to express themselves. Pre-tenure, their influence was clearly limited. This kind of mentorship was perceived by participants as a form of misguided support and they provoked feelings of discouragement and frustration.

Even though the majority of Hispanic faculty at these HSIs emphasized areas of support in their tenure process that contributed to their sense of belonging by fostering care and
acceptance, there were these other times when some felt silenced or made to feel their opinions were different and not valued. When their identity, thoughts and values were challenged, so too was their sense of belonging.

In the following section, I describe another way participants’ sense of belonging was challenged. This condition was often tied to the perception that they were not fitting the White faculty prototype.

Theme 4: Fitting a Faculty Prototype Challenged Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging

When participants were asked to describe a time they felt they did not belong within their college, most participants provided examples about not meeting a preconceived expectation of how a faculty member should look or act. They were not challenged on their academic record but, rather, it was on their language, cultural references, clothing, hairstyle, and age that were the sources of criticism.

In short, Hispanic faculty described experiences of not fitting a particular faculty prototype as challenging to their sense of belonging because it prompted feelings of unacceptance both in their college and professionally. Ten of 13 participants identified not fitting into the typical faculty prototype as a cultural challenge. These ten participants are not the same 10 of 13 participants as previously mentioned. The typical faculty prototype refers to the historically based fact/idea that the professor in the room presents as older, White, and male. The appearance, language, and behaviors of the Hispanic faculty participants in this study were often recognized as unexpected or problematic in some manner by another faculty, staff, or student and it lessened their feelings of acceptance.

Diego described a time when he spoke Spanish with a student in an English course and it was perceived by another colleague as problematic. A non-Hispanic colleague challenged his
pedagogical choice to use Spanish when teaching English, yet Diego felt it was helping him to meet students where they are, both academically and personally. According to Diego, his colleague was unaware of these reasons and was only disagreeing in terms of what they thought was an “appropriate” approach pedagogically.

Similarly, Ginez noted a negative encounter with a senior faculty member Joel (pseudonym), who was offended by comments Ginez made at a faculty meeting. While Ginez’s Hispanic colleagues overwhelmingly agreed with and applauded the remarks, Joel mentioned taking offense to Ginez’s comment with the dean. When Ginez was later called in to explain the comment to the dean, the dean was surprised that Joel brought it to the dean’s attention because it was not something the dean understood as offensive. While the dean did not take any action towards this event, the situation upset Ginez because Joel had brought his concern to the dean instead of directly to Ginez’s attention. This action signaled to Ginez a lessened sense of belonging feeling Joel was not a true colleague.

Juan, Carmen, Carlos, Sofia, and Joaquin also gave examples of how their appearance played a role in their interactions with other students or professors. Carlos explained how students would frequently look for the older White professor and would not initially approach him as the professor. Carlos’ response to being misidentified was to proactively find a solution to this issue. Therefore, he and his team requested and obtained shirts that indicated their roles as professors.

Juan mentioned there were times he felt his appearance played a role in how others approached him. He explained:

I think sometimes . . . people think I’m younger than I am, and I dress like this. You know, I wear t-shirts and I have long hair and I sometimes have a beard so I think
sometimes people like think I’m a student . . . sometimes like in the academic senate, in
the meeting like I might be talking and if I go over my time, I mean, I feel like I’m
quickly reminded that I’ve gone over my time. Or I sometimes feel like, if I looked older
or um, if I was a different color, would that happen? Would they say that to me? Is it
because like I look young and I . . . dress young . . . I feel like sometimes maybe I come
off as younger or newer and what I was saying is I don’t know if that would be different,
if I’d be, if my case would be heard differently if I was a different color or if I was, I
looked older. If I dressed more um, college appropriate, I guess. And everything I do is
with intention and purpose . . . This is how I dress, and this is how I want to dress, and I
don’t want to fit into a certain mold. So, it is somewhat intentionally, but maybe it comes
with also, some consequences, too.

Juan said he chose his appearance on his own terms despite the challenges, rather than dress in a
way that was expected of faculty. The consequence was he was not always viewed as having the
same position or status as the other White older professors.

Sofia, Alba, and Gloria all explained how their experiences and sense of belonging were
negatively impacted by the treatment of other Hispanic or non-Hispanic faculty of color. These
experiences demonstrate how problems related to race and gender existed among some in-groups
of Hispanic faculty. Additionally, it demonstrates some participants were challenged to belong in
groups where the majority of participants felt they belonged most: the broader diverse Latino
community.

Sofia explained times the challenge of feeling she belonged came from within the
Hispanic community, where she felt unaccepted because her skin “isn’t dark enough” compared
to her Hispanic colleagues. Additionally, Sofia noted times where Hispanic male colleagues
engaged in jokes with her about why she was attending a faculty meeting when they were aware she was a faculty member. Sofia said in some ways, those comments mean, “keep your place [as a Latina] . . . you don’t have a place [here].” Sofia’s experiences diminished her connection with the Latino community through issues of race and gender, which lessened her sense of belonging.

Gloria noted the most challenging aspect for her, as she reflected on her sense of belonging, was tending to the differences among the Mexican American versus Nicaraguan community. Gloria explained, “. . . it’s like trying to adopt twice . . . to the mainstream.” Gloria felt two forms of marginalization: (a) not being part of the White mainstream culture in her college and (b) not being part of the Nicaraguan community in her college. While this was challenging for Gloria, she maintained she still felt she belonged at her college.

For Alba, most of the challenges came from non-Hispanic faculty of color mentors which, in some cases turned so negative, she was “close to quitting.” Initially, Alba felt positive and strong relationships with non-Hispanic FOC mentors. However, her relationships with non-Hispanic faculty of color declined over time because Hispanic faculty were not offered the same community support as non-Hispanic faculty of color. Alba highlighted the most problematic part of her experience was trying to understand why all faculty of color couldn’t support each other similarly. Alba struggled with feeling Hispanic faculty needs were dismissed as unimportant in comparison to other non-Hispanic faculty of color needs, which minimized her sense of belonging. She gave examples where non-Hispanic faculty of color rallied around each other in times of personal and professional hardships, but the same approach was absent towards Hispanic faculty.
Carmen emphasized that both race and age played roles in how she was treated by other faculty members. Carmen felt these experiences detracted from her sense of belonging. Most notably Carmen explained:

I always get confused [that I am] a student and it is frustrating, ’cause it’s like, is it ’cause like I’m a person of color, is it ’cause I’m young? Is it both? . . . ’Cause it’s like a sense of like what are you doing here? Or like, this is for faculty, like you’re not a faculty member and it’s ’cause you don’t look like one . . . I got told I was hired too young . . . like straight out people telling me . . .

Expectations regarding age was also problematic for Martina. She explained a time when she planned to apply for a full-time position within her college and another White colleague stated, “Oh kiddo, that’ll be good practice for you . . . You’re going up against instructors who have been teaching as long as you’ve been alive.” Disparaging comments related to age motivated Martina to prove her colleague wrong and obtain the position. Martina felt her knowledge and experience were more important than being judged strictly by her age, yet she realized that she was not accepted by her colleague.

In addition to these cultural challenges, in the next section I discuss some of the cultural and structural challenges Hispanic faculty noted regarding how the processes to hire additional Hispanic and non-Hispanic faculty of color factored into feelings that Hispanic faculty did not belong.

**Theme 5: Faculty of Color Hiring Process Challenged Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging**

Most participants indicated the process to hire more faculty of color (FOC) made them feel disconnected from their college due to challenging attitudes and biases from administrators.
For example, comments made by Caucasians who feared being replaced by faculty of color, as well as negative comments towards faculty of color applicants challenged Hispanic faculty’s sense of belonging. Participants explained inadequate structures and biased attitudes towards FOC applicants in the hiring process made them feel disconnected and detracted from their sense of belonging in their college.

Sofia described the attitudes of administrators of color versus the attitudes of administrators who were Caucasian who serve on search committees. She felt the Caucasians often pushed back on hiring faculty of color and without appropriate structures in place to address discrimination, faculty of color were challenged to get a position, particularly when Caucasians expressed concern that hiring a person of color would mean others were “being pushed out.” She described it this way:

So, I think we are getting the support of the need to hire more faculty of color but there is pushback from the administrators that are not of color or faculty that feel like somehow, they're being cheated out. The Caucasian have the majority in numbers on campus, and they don't need to fear that we're hiring people of color, and I think that that's a very real thing I think some faculty members and staff have about hiring more people of color. Because I've heard it in some interviewing committees on the side . . . we hired a faculty researcher . . . But the runner-up was a Caucasian and she wasn't hired, and she thought she wasn't hired because she wasn't a person of color. Well, I was on . . . that committee, and that's not true. That's not why she wasn't hired, so I don't need to justify anything to her. But those feelings are out there. She ended up leaving, so I think there's some threat to some of the um, the faculty staff that are Caucasian, that they're being pushed out because we're moving towards hiring, you know, faculty of color. But it's unfortunate
because you know there is, there's disparity in the hiring and we're just trying to be . . . equitable . . . So, I think there's that dialogue that kind of needs to continue.

Sofía’s example demonstrates how some Caucasian administrators’ discriminatory attitudes impact the hiring of new faculty of color. When Caucasian administrators felt they were being pushed out by faculty of color, it created hesitancy on their part to move forward with hiring faculty of color. There was an underlying assumption that indicated that Caucasians need to remain the majority. Sofía felt that the hiring structure did not foster a sense of belonging. Instead, it struck a concern that faculty of color never really belong.

Rosa’s experience was similar to Sofía’s, in that “some deans [say they] still hire the best qualified people, no matter what they look like.” According to Rosa that means, “Does their [applicant’s] jargon sound the way your own does?” Rosa described unconscious bias that can end up impeding the hiring of faculty of color. Rosa interpreted this administrator’s approach as reflecting a perspective and attitude that did not value diversifying the campus.

Similarly, Alba explained how her college approached applications through a “we just got the best candidate” approach versus a “we got the best African American or the best Latino candidate” approach. She stated she feels there is “very little active recruitment” for faculty of color because they’re “not allowed to use race or ethnicity as a qualification on an application.” Without a specific policy, without the ability to identify race on applications, these attitudes create a barrier to hiring more faculty of color. There was not always an explicit more formal way to identify applicants who are from different racial backgrounds to create faculty diversity. While it may help to avoid discrimination, it also hinders the ability to purposely hire those reflective of student populations in the college.
Gloria explained how her college is “trying to have a diverse pool” of applicants by changing the structure of the application process. They are trying to remove things that appear to be barriers to applicants in general. For example, her college removed the requirement for a letter of recommendation for applicants in hopes to increase the number of applicants of color. She explained:

We did an analysis, and we found that pretty much across the board, not just with Hispanics or in general, for whatever reason people were not completing their applications because of those letters, so we . . . have to think about, ‘Okay, uh, how important are these letters?’

Even with removing this perceived barrier for applicants, Gloria noted that more needs to be done to attract a diverse pool of applicants. She went on to discuss how frequently there was no analysis or evaluation in place to determine if any of the changes they do make to the process made a difference in who applied or is ultimately hired. These participants’ experiences show how hiring more faculty of color has been and continues to be challenging in their colleges. Additionally, it demonstrates how Hispanic faculty are frustrated at the way hiring faculty of color is approached somewhat haphazardly and giving the impression that hiring a diverse faculty is not important to them. This caused them to question their own sense of belonging in their college.

Diego explained the importance of the hiring committee. His college’s attempts to hire more faculty of color fell short due to the way applicants were obtained, and the way persons were appointed to the hiring or search committee:

I’ve heard many times . . . whenever you bring up a need to hire more folks, but what they, what their argument is, and I’ve heard this many times, and not just at my campus.
Um, we don't get enough applicants. Um, you know. They say, ‘Well, we can't hire you if you don't apply,’ things like that. And my rebuttal would be, first off, it's, why are we not um attracting applicants? …I've heard a lot of horror stories of things that people say in the interview room. Once the interviewee has walked out and people would make kind of failed comments about, it's their background, their education, whatever. But it really has to do with what they are, whether it's their race, or whatever right. And so, I think that it all comes down to who is in your hiring committee and why are you not um attracting more applicants.

Diego’s example demonstrated how individual biases were perceived as impacting the way the hiring committee members viewed applicants. The “failed comments” regarding each applicant signaled to Diego not only how the hiring committee viewed applicants who were different from themselves, but also how they may have viewed current team members within the college different from themselves. Diego’s acknowledgement of these situations as “horror stories” and his rebuttal to the college about why they were not attracting applicants of color speaks to how these actions were perceived negatively. Furthermore, when suggestions and comments that were different from those of the hiring committee were made, they were unwelcomed. He felt it showed a lack of acceptance of different ideas on the college’s part and Diego felt the process undermined his sense of belonging.

Luis and Martina both described their colleges as not pushing to hire additional faculty of color one way or the other. Luis said his college says that they hire those who will get the job done in the best possible way, while Martina said her college is more concerned with filling a gap with someone who’s qualified and meets the minimum qualifications. Martina also noted, “. . . but I think our part-timers are much more diverse than our full-timers.” When part-time
faculty is more diverse than full-time faculty, it raises concern among these faculty of color as to whether their college is only willing to invest in a diverse faculty body if they are not tenure track. Furthermore, when faculty of color witness their college half-heartedly investing in faculty of color by hiring them in primarily part-time roles, it can diminish how faculty of color perceive their value as persons of color in the college.

Leadership can make a difference as described by some participants. They noted visible changes in how their college approached hiring faculty of color based on how the issue was approached by leadership. Ginez explained that, while hiring faculty of color had been challenging at their college in the past, one president helped create change in this area. Ginez noted student supports, funding, and hiring faculty of color were all positively impacted under one new president’s leadership. However, Ginez noted initial skepticism about the types of change the new president would be able to put forth regarding the hiring practices for faculty of color because of Ginez’s past experiences with leaders who did not make strides in this area. The changes the president made were beneficial for Ginez’s sense of belonging because it showed commitment to diversity. Here, Ginez explained this president “proved [Ginez] wrong in so many ways” and heightened Ginez’s sense of belonging because their ideas and practices were aligned.

Two participants explained that, although hiring faculty of color was challenging in the past, steps have been taken to alleviate this difficulty. Carmen explained she felt leadership was wanting to push for more faculty of color with faculty prioritization. Joaquin also noted his college has demonstrated “true commitment” in the past two years for hiring faculty of color, based largely having anti-racist conversations on campus. This structure addressed unconscious bias and was beneficial when trying to hire additional faculty of color.
These participants’ experiences show how difficult the process can be to hire more faculty of color. It is not solely a matter of not having enough applicants of color or having applicants of color as the most qualified in the applicant pool. Instead, institutionalized practices reflecting racism within each college must be identified and challenged in order to dismantle institutional and personal biases impacting how faculty of color are hired. Administrators’ attitudes and hiring practices are structured in a way that does not support hiring additional faculty of color. With the majority of participants identifying hiring more faculty of color as a priority, they explained how hiring processes embedded with fear and bias hindered this goal and detracted from their sense of belonging.

Hiring faculty of color was a cultural and structural challenge for the majority of participants, usually due to administrators attitudes and perceptions towards hiring faculty of color but also because structures were not in place to help ensure diversity hiring. Participants who felt leadership did not follow through with practices that would result in hiring more faculty of color experienced frustration or resignation on how things had always been done. There was a lack of alignment in beliefs about how the college should be run and support for diversity.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to explore how different levels of representation among Hispanic tenured faculty influenced Hispanic faculty experiences in two-year Hispanic Serving Institutions. Additionally, the purpose of this study was to better understand factors Hispanic tenured faculty perceived as supportive or challenging to their sense of belonging in their colleges. Although faculty from two different types of HSIs with varying levels of Hispanic tenured and tenure track representation were interviewed, the majority of participants had similar experiences. Five major themes emerged from the data. Connections with Hispanic and non-
Hispanic faculty of color was important for participants’ sense of belonging because they were able to relate to one another more easily through shared experiences. Recognition from students, staff, faculty, and administrators positively influenced participants’ sense of belonging. A supportive tenure process enhanced participants’ sense of belonging through care and acceptance from those in their college. Two areas participants felt their sense of belonging was challenged were related to not fitting the atypical White faculty prototype and disagreement with their ideas and administrators’ approaches to hire more faculty of color. In the next chapter, I discuss the key findings of this study, their significance, implications, and policy recommendations.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore in depth the experiences of 13 Hispanic tenured faculty in some California Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) to better understand how Hispanic faculty representation impacts experiences of Hispanic faculty of color (FOC), specifically their sense of belonging. Additionally, this study sought to better understand factors in community college HSIs which challenged or supported Hispanic tenured faculty’s sense of belonging.

This chapter first compares this study’s findings with findings from studies of (a) FOC experiences in four-year predominantly White institutions (PWIs), (b) FOC experiences in other two-year community colleges, and (c) FOC sense of belonging at HSIs. Two theoretical frameworks were used as lenses to make meaning from the results: sense of belonging and critical race theory. Then, a discussion of implications for practice that may be valuable for use by colleges seeking to better support FOC in their pursuit of a tenured career in academia and their sense of belonging are included in this chapter. This chapter concludes with recommendations for further research.

The research questions that guided this study were:

(1) How does Hispanic faculty representation in Hispanic Serving Institutions influence Hispanic tenured faculty’s sense of belonging?

(2) What other factors in Hispanic Serving Institutions influence Hispanic tenured faculty’s sense of belonging?

A qualitative case study design was used to deeply explore the experiences of tenured Hispanic faculty, as well as understand factors influencing their sense of belonging. The sample
size of 13 participants were recruited from nine different California Community College Hispanic Serving Institutions. Participants were interviewed individually for approximately 50-70 minutes, and audio recorded via Zoom and an audio recorder. These audio recordings were later transcribed, and pseudonyms were applied to all participant identifiers (i.e., name, college, and other identifiable traits) to maintain participant confidentiality and anonymity. First and second cycle coding were used to analyze data and five themes emerged from the data that are relevant to Hispanic faculty’s sense of belonging.

My findings revealed participants’ sense of belonging was positively influenced in five primary ways: (a) when they were able to build connections with Hispanic and non-Hispanic faculty of color both inside and outside of their institution, (b) when they were recognized by administrators, faculty, and students, and (c) when the tenure process offered strategies that enabled them to feel supported, cared for, and accepted. The participants in this study felt that their sense of belonging was challenged however in two important ways: first, when they were made to feel that they did not fit an expected faculty prototype. In those instances, they felt that a part of them was not accepted by others in the college. Second, when administrators displayed a lack of commitment to hire FOC, Hispanic faculty felt there was a disconnect of priorities between themselves and administrators and therefore, perhaps Hispanic faculty were not welcome.

Literature on belonging was used to provide a theoretical lens in which to understand how certain factors contributed to or detracted from participants’ sense of belonging. Critical race theory (CRT) provided a lens to understand participant experiences in the context of higher education and helped to analyze embedded practices, systems, and ideals in HSIs reflecting racism as ordinary, interest convergence, and intersectionality.
The following sections discuss these findings and the significance and relevance of each through these theoretical lenses.

Discussion of Findings

While the tenured Hispanic faculty interviewed for this study encountered some different experiences at their HSI community colleges, all offered five common themes to explain how specific factors supported or diminished their sense of belonging. Each theme is discussed in detail in the following sections.

Connection with Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Faculty of Color Fostered a Sense of Belonging

The initial assumption that motivated this study was that greater representation of Hispanic faculty on college campuses would more positively influence their sense of belonging. It is more typical that Hispanic faculty on college campuses with few Hispanic faculty do not feel a sense of belonging. Therefore, I chose to focus this study on the experiences of Hispanic faculty at community college HSIs. In general, community colleges have greater numbers of faculty of color than four-year colleges for many reasons, but a primary reason is the opportunity to teach an increasingly diverse student population (Manzo, 2000). However, I also wanted to test the theory of representation by seeking two different groups of participants within the HSI colleges: (1) tenured Hispanic faculty in HSIs with 25% or more Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty and (2) tenured Hispanic faculty in HSIs with less than 25% Hispanic tenured and tenure track Hispanic faculty. This study showed how Hispanic participants from both HSI groups were able to foster their sense of belonging in ways that were overall very similar because there were an available number of Hispanics or non-Hispanic faculty of color who they were able to connect with both inside and outside of their colleges. Admittedly, it was easiest for...
Hispanic FOC who had other Hispanic FOC on their campus to connect to, however, in both cases, for both the faculty that looked inside the college and the faculty who looked outside the college, the connections they made with these individuals supported their sense of belonging. Because they were able to connect with those who had similar backgrounds, culture, or experiences as themselves, they felt a greater sense of belonging in academia. The value of cultivating a “broader sense of group cohesion” supports previous research that shows the ways in which cohesion with others of similar background can strengthen a sense of belonging and help individuals to feel more like they are part of a larger academic group (Hurtado and Carter, 1997).

This theory also agrees with literature from Anant (1966) that discusses how a person’s sense of belonging is shaped by their feelings of being an indispensable and integral part of a system or environment (i.e., department, college, district, or as a colleague within the same field). The multiple layers of the educational system, which participants were part of, created different layers of opportunity to form connections and foster belonging. As Martinez et al. (2017) points out, where faculty of color are able to build connections with other scholars of color when navigating academia, they are able to create a stronger sense of community.

Many Hispanic faculty from colleges with less Hispanic faculty representation on their campus had to look outside of their colleges (i.e., college district, nonprofit Hispanic organization, and faculty of color colleagues in similar fields) to build connections with both Hispanic and non-Hispanic FOC. While arguably more difficult, the faculty in this study said it was possible and it gave them a sense of belonging. They felt they were able to share commonalities through their professional academic area of focus.
These Hispanic faculty found various social contexts to foster a sense of belonging, personally and professionally. The data from this study shows how building partnerships and connections to resources external to the college campus can positively influence faculty’s sense of belonging and suggests that providing networking opportunities for FOC with other colleagues of color in similar fields of study could build greater connections. If colleges created spaces on-campus for those with historically marginalized identities to hold informative seminars for all persons of color, it could help faculty contextualize their experiences and have exposure to a greater support network. This also demonstrates there are benefits of being on a campus with greater representation of faculty because faculty were able to access others like themselves more easily to gain support and cultivate a sense of belonging, without having to search for connections outside of their college.

**Recognition Supported Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging**

Support through recognition from those on campus was important to Hispanic faculty’s sense of belonging. When participants were asked to explain a time they felt a true sense of belonging at their college, 10 of 13 participants cited it was when they were recognized by persons in their college for their expertise or accomplishments. Specifically, participants explained how the recognition they received from others at their college made them feel appreciated and valued for their contributions to the college. This finding supports prior studies that showed when faculty of color feel their work is valued or if they are given autonomy and independence, they are likely to be retained, even if they are not satisfied with their jobs overall (Jayakumar et al., 2009). Valuing faculty contributions can be powerful. For example, as Rosa and Alba explained, when they received messages from administrators or peers that a Hispanic faculty team members’ presence was appreciated, they felt they belonged. When Ginez felt
“heard” by peers and administrators, it positively impacted Ginez’s sense of belonging.

Martina’s experience demonstrated how her sense of belonging was strengthened over time through opportunities to make meaningful contributions in her department. She explained that she came close to quitting when she started at her college due to clashing with the dean regarding ethical issues. Over time, she became recognized as an increasingly valued member in her college and eventually was made to feel she was a “staple” in the department she worked in. Her job satisfaction was seemingly low at the beginning of her career, but as she was given many opportunities to take on new responsibilities and help shape her department, she gained a sense of belonging. These examples of recognition connect to previous literature on belonging and highlight the importance that people hold in being made to feel like they matter, are valued, and are important to others (Goodenow, 1993; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Strayhorn, 2019).

While recognition is often considered in the workplace to be provided by leadership or peers, in this case participants mentioned the importance of being recognized by students as well. Specifically, Hispanic faculty who were recognized by Hispanic students as important role models, felt a greater sense of belonging. Three participants cited how being a Hispanic faculty member allowed them to be Hispanic role models for Hispanic students with similar backgrounds. The important point here, according to the Hispanic faculty, is that recognition came not just from those in equal or higher ranks than themselves but from those they serve. It was students that the faculty cared most about.

This finding points to the important role recognition can play when trying to foster a sense of belonging for faculty members. As Settles et al., (2018) point out, when faculty of color are not recognized, this can make them feel their accomplishments are unimportant and that they do not belong. For participants to receive recognition from administrators, peers, and students,
they had to be seen and known in some capacity in their colleges. There were several strategies used in the community college HSIs which promoted faculty members accomplishments. They sent email communications about their successes, gave annual faculty awards, faculty peers engaged in personal and professional conversations, administrators provided opportunities with increased responsibility, and there were opportunities for students to provide feedback to instructors. These strategies offer suggestions for other colleges to consider as they seek to facilitate FOC’s sense of belonging. Putting practices in place that allow for new faculty to be known and seen can enhance their sense of belonging, help them avoid feelings of isolation and loneliness and may encourage further engagement with the college.

**Tenure Process Enhanced Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging Through Care and Acceptance**

In general, the Hispanic faculty at these HSIs felt supported by a culture of care that was in evidence, even in the high stakes tenure process. Most participants explained that the tenure process was a positive experience for them because it was a process that allowed them to feel cared about. Most participants from colleges where Hispanic faculty representation was lower, also indicated feeling the tenure-track process was “smooth” or without barriers. They highlighted how the tenure process offered features that enabled them to feel supported, cared for, and accepted. For example, their HSI had established mentorships, evaluations from faculty and students, opportunities for them to choose committee members, engage in professional development, and receive personal feedback. Most faculty explained that these practices supported their growth in caring ways during the tenure-track process. Additionally, participants felt a positive sense of belonging when the college invested in them by paying for programs to maintain certifications.
One exception to the entire group of participants who felt their tenure-track process was positive and supportive was Gloria. She said there were no supports in place to help her navigate the tenure-track process: “No, it was just basically welcome to E College. And here are your classes and you’ll figure it out.” This quote embodies the opposite positive experience of the majority of participants’ tenure-track experiences, but it also illustrates the power of the tenure process in contributing to a faculty’s sense of belonging. Gloria later reflected on her experience saying how she wished the tenure process had more supports in place then, as well as now for tenure-track faculty. Participants’ reflections on the tenure process indicated that tenure-track faculty may experience a lessened sense of belonging when they lack support and face uncertainties about tenure-track faculty expectations, as well as networking opportunities.

The influence of the tenure track process in general has been noted by previous research to have a powerful influence on the retention of faculty, often negatively impacting FOC (see Garrison-Wade et al., 2012; Robinson, 2018). In this case, the tenure process was a positive influence because it included a mentoring program to support FOC. Most participants also found their tenure-track experience to be positive because they received positive feedback, professional development, and training opportunities. Importantly, participants were made to feel they were cared by mentors, peers, administrators, or other tenure-track committee members. The culture of care was exhibited through the tenure process for the majority of these HSI community college FOC and the result was that they felt they belonged.

There were some exceptions. Martina and Ginez for example did not feel supported. They explained that while they had mentors, their mentor suggested they not speak out about issues that were important to them such as thoughts about changing student programs or commenting on ethical issues regarding another faculty member. The insinuation was that it
might affect their tenure and/or disrupt the status quo. Moreover, both participants noted their frustration and how it affected their perception as to whether they belonged at the college. Ginez and Martina felt silenced making them feel their opinions and beliefs were unimportant and less valued.

Kelly and Kutch’s (2017) research described ways in which caring in the workplace can positively influence employees’ feelings. When individuals feel welcomed, trusted, and, as though they are an investment, someone who needs to be heard, and are contributing and making a difference, they will feel that they belong. Participants in this study mentioned they felt a sense of belonging when most of these conditions existed. Additionally, if one of these items was lacking (such as participants not being heard), they were negatively impacted. The culture of care used to support tenure-track faculty who worked at the two-year community college HSIs in this study implies colleges should take stock of how care permeates through and beyond their leaders, such as who is serving on the tenure-track committees and the practices that occur in the tenure process.

Providing care, or the absence of it, demonstrates how a college culture and its structures can affect faculty’s sense of belonging. If tenure-track faculty are expected to be an important part of the college community, the way their voices and concerns are addressed during the tenure-track process should be seriously considered at a minimum, instead of shutting down or avoiding them altogether.

**Fitting a Faculty Prototype Challenged Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging**

Although most participants felt care and acceptance from those in their college during the tenure process, there were other times when they felt less accepted. When participants felt they did not fit a prototype that was expected by other faculty, their sense of belonging was
challenged. Some of the Hispanic faculty in this study felt they did not fit the typical White male faculty prototype (in terms or age, race, or gender) or they did not fit in “enough” as a member of their own Hispanic community, due to having skin color that was too light or they were from a different cultural background (i.e., being a Mexican American faculty among a majority of Nicaraguan faculty). There were instances of both out-group and in-group issues that impacted participants. The issues that were most prominent related to choices Hispanic faculty made with language, cultural references, clothing, hairstyle, and their age. Most participants cited interactions they had with students or professors where they felt their appearance impacted how they were approached and interacted with. For example, in one case a Hispanic faculty was not identified as the course instructor by a student. In another case a Hispanic faculty was faulted for using Spanish as a pedagogical approach to support learning because it did not match standard practice.

Critical race theory (CRT) helps in understanding the dynamic that was occurring when these faculty were made to feel they did not fit some prescribed set of expectations. CRT points out that people’s experiences are not only impacted by race but by other social categories as well. The interaction of multiple categories (i.e., race, gender, sex, class, national origin, and sexual orientation) is called intersectionality and this concept helps us understand whose voice is privileged and who has power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Three participants in this study explained how issues of race and gender played a role in their ability to foster a sense of belonging. Notably, Sofia and Gloria specifically cited in-group differences among the Latino community that was at the core of their feelings of alienation. Male Latino colleagues made Sofia feel unwelcomed at a faculty meeting by making jokes and comments about why she was present at the faculty meeting in the first place, even though they
knew she was a tenured faculty member. Sofia attributed the comments to mean, “keep your place [as a Latina] . . . you don’t have a place here.” Gloria explained how differences among her Mexican American background conflicted with the majority of Nicaraguan faculty on campus. Gloria was trying to adapt to not only the mainstream White faculty expectations, but also the majority Nicaraguan faculty on campus who had their own expectations.

On the other hand, one Hispanic faculty, Carmen, found that initial interactions with non-Hispanic faculty of color were positive, but over time she received inadequate support from her mentors compared to the support offered to other non-Hispanic FOC. Martina also explained how age and race played a role when she was initially hired at her college when one White colleague told her to apply for a position because it would “be good practice.” According to Martina, this comment implied she wouldn’t be able to get the tenure-track role due to her age. These examples show how Hispanic faculty derived perceptions of belonging as a result of the interactions they encountered with others both inside and outside their ethnic group that were related to appearance, race, age, or gender.

Participants’ experiences demonstrate how an unwelcoming academic culture can have a significant influence on faculty’s sense of belonging. When participants’ language, culture, age, race, or gender are rejected by other colleagues, it lessens their sense of belonging but also sends a message that participants are not enough, or they are inadequate in some way(s). The participants in this study told stories of feeling rejected when they were perceived as too young, which sent the message that they were not experienced enough. They experienced in-group rejection as well if their skin was not “dark enough.” They were perceived as not completely belonging as a Latino/a. Also, if participants were FOC, but not of the majority FOC (i.e., Asian, Black, etc.), they were not seen as important as the majority FOC group. For example, at one
college, Black faculty were the majority group and some faculty made one Hispanic participant feel they didn’t belong by ignoring her personal hardships, yet tending to the needs of Black colleagues when they needed support.

Discrimination occurred at the hands of students as well. When Hispanic faculty were not White, students did not always treat them as their instructor, but instead as another student. When Hispanic faculty received the message that they were inadequate, it prompted them to consider if something about themselves (i.e., age, race, gender, etc.) was wrong or not enough, although many still had positive self-affirmations amidst these interactions. Clearly, these forms of invalidation imposed on participants created discord between their own beliefs about themselves and how others perceived them.

These interactions highlight the importance for current faculty to be mindful of their interactions with newer faculty, especially those who are different from themselves. Engaging in discussions or actions that challenge faculty’s identities create an unwelcoming environment and suggest that some arbitrary campus culture must be maintained. Samuels and Zeckhauser (1988) first coined the term status quo bias and demonstrated how a status quo choice acts as a psychological anchor and, when people are faced with multiple choices, the status quo prevails. In this study, participants were often faced with comments and attitudes from other faculty or students that challenged participants’ decisions related to their appearance or actions. These experiences sought to keep the status quo in place. They point to the importance for colleges to create spaces which challenge status quo expectations among faculty and students, as well as incorporate trainings for how to address these issues. Not only were attitudes and biases shown to treat these Hispanic faculty unfairly, but they also allowed other practices to go unchecked. I discuss these practices next.
Faculty of Color Hiring Process Challenged Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging

Most participants stated hiring more FOC was important to their college but making that a reality was far more challenging in practice. Participants felt that administrators lacked a commitment to hiring FOC and perceived this as a challenge to their sense of belonging. They interpreted it as a lack of commitment to faculty of color in general. The majority of participants explained their colleges have had challenges with hiring additional FOC. From their perspective, these challenges were frequently related to administrators’ attitudes and practices during the hiring process. Some examples provided by participants represented forms of racism and maintaining status quo practices which participants seemed to have difficulty addressing. CRT acknowledges racism as present in everyday interactions and individuals in the dominant culture often fail to acknowledge its presence, which makes it challenging to address (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Diggs et al., 2009). Here, we see how hiring attitudes and practices form in ways that are not supportive of potential faculty or color.

Participants’ experiences highlighted how there was an “othering” towards applicants of color, as well as outright fear towards future faculty of color who might replace Caucasian faculty. Critical race theory explains that racism happens in everyday interactions and often includes the “othering” of people of color, which was the case on some hiring committees (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). When these practices are ignored by the dominant culture, it makes it even more difficult to remove practices that place FOC at a disadvantage. Furthermore, one White female faculty member feared they were being pushed out by persons of color, indicating they felt a form of ownership of their role as faculty and that it could be taken by FOC. This acts as a form of interest convergence, which CRT describes as when gains for people of color only occur to the extent that they converge with the self-interests of Whites (Bell, 1980). In other
words, this White faculty member needed to feel that both she and any newly hired FOC would benefit from FOC being hired. However, she outright challenged the hiring of FOC when she felt threatened that it would negatively impact her. These comments and attitudes help demonstrate how there were hiring structures in place that privileged Whites, but also that it was very difficult for some faculty to challenge these administrators’ attitudes.

Finally, three other participants explained that while hiring FOC was not prioritized in the past, some administrators in their colleges were making important strides in this area. Ginez, Joaquin, and Carmen noted the dedication and commitment from leadership towards issues such as hiring FOC. It was seen as important for the changes they wanted to see in their colleges. Their experiences show how changing embedded practices that favored Whites in the past were being changed with determination, commitment, and action from administrators.

Participants’ comments show that administrators’ attitudes and practices towards hiring FOC often conflicted with their own ideas as to the importance of hiring FOC. Most participants expressed concern about these attitudes and how they often reflected maintaining the status quo. Such attitudes were likely to reproduce inequity and challenge the sense of belonging among FOC who felt they were not heard.

**Implications for Practice**

This research provides important insights that can guide leadership practices and best support faculty of color on college campuses. First, implementing practices that recognize faculty for their contributions, achievements, and ideas can help foster a positive sense of belonging. This approach was meaningful for faculty when it came from peers, administrators, and students. Additionally, leaders should be open to opinions expressed by new faculty of color, especially when opinions address or attempt to dismantle current systems in the college that may
negatively impact diversity efforts. Bringing new ideas and opinions from faculty of color to the forefront of discussions can help leaders avoid attitudes and decisions that maintain the status quo.

This study makes several additional contributions. First, it illustrates the importance of providing opportunities for Hispanic faculty of color to have other Hispanic or non-Hispanic faculty of color to support them. Creating opportunities for Hispanic and non-Hispanic FOC to engage in discourse and work towards similar goals can facilitate group cohesion (McKinlay, 2008). Sharing similar backgrounds, cultures, and experiences with other Hispanic faculty of color provided faculty opportunities to build meaningful and important connections. These connections facilitated an environment where they felt cared for, comfortable, and relatable. The ability to connect with those who were Hispanic or other FOC who were non-Hispanic provided more benefits than challenges for participants.

Second, this study adds important information to the literature on what it means to cultivate a sense of belonging for Hispanic faculty in HSIs. Through the exploration of Hispanic tenured faculty experiences in California Community College Hispanic Serving Institutions, this study shows the policies and practices that support and challenge faculty in their attempts to feel they belong. Strayhorn’s (2012) research which, only focused on students’ sense of belonging, is helpful however, in providing a definition of belonging. He states that belonging is the product of a “perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group or others on campus” (pp. 28-29). Most Hispanic tenured faculty participants in this study provided numerous examples that coincide with this definition. They felt they belonged when they were working in a culture of care and when tenure practices were structured to support them. They felt
respected and valued when they were recognized by their peers or administrators for accomplishments or contributions.

Hispanic faculty’s sense of belonging was challenged however, when they didn’t feel they fit a specific faculty prototype due to their appearance, language, or behaviors. Participants’ examples showed how intersectionality played an important role in how they were perceived by others. Age, gender, and ethnic/racial were the most frequently mentioned intersecting identities. CRT recognizes race as central to experiences but acknowledges how other identities can intersect with race to influence people’s “power, voice, and representation” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 2). When participants noted areas of intersectionality, it was often in terms of disadvantage. For example, some intersectional identities that participants felt prompted negative interactions were race and age, race and gender, and race and national origin. Some participants explained feeling a lessened sense of belonging when these areas intersected and points to the importance of considering how intersectionality may impact faculty of color in other areas as well.

Their sense of belonging was also challenged when investigating attitudes and approaches of administrators when trying to hire more faculty of color. Most participants explained difficulty in understanding and shifting the attitudes of administrators towards hiring more faculty of color, because it was often noted that practices were inadequate to obtain new faculty of color. Some participants noted there was no push one way or the other towards hiring more faculty of color, while a few mentioned their administrators had made real changes towards hiring faculty of color more recently. With the significant amount of research focused on hiring more faculty of color, it begs the question as to why changes are still not taking place and maybe even more so in HSIs, where students of color are represented in greater numbers than PWIs.
CRT offers some insight into how institutionalized racism comes into play and makes it extremely difficult to change deeply rooted racist practices which privilege Whites in educational spaces. CRT understands “racism as ordinary” and takes shape through social, political, and economic structures which provide benefits to White individuals over people of color. We see this highlighted in the above examples. Furthermore, the examples above show that changes to institutionalized racism can take place but it requires commitment and follow-through.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This study provides new insights about factors that impacted Hispanic tenured faculty’s sense of belonging in two-year community college Hispanic Serving Institutions. Initially, this study sought tenured and tenure track faculty to participate but only tenured faculty were available for recruitment. One recommendation for further research would be to recruit tenure track Hispanic faculty to understand factors that may be influencing their sense of belonging in different or similar ways to tenured Hispanic faculty. Furthermore, this would provide more information about tenure track faculty who are likely more vulnerable than faculty in tenured positions. Taking this approach could also shed light on how power dynamics play a role in how sense of belonging is fostered among faculty.

In this study, a qualitative approach was used to delve deeply into participants experiences. Future studies could apply similar methods but in college settings that have more differences. For example, comparative studies with tenured faculty of color in HSIs and tenured faculty of color in non-HSIs could be done. Non-HSIs could include other federally designated colleges such as, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions. Comparative studies provide
opportunities to learn about more factors that help explain similarities and differences (Patton, 2015).

**Conclusion**

This study explored the experiences of tenured Hispanic faculty in two-year community college Hispanic Serving Institutions to understand how representation and other factors influence participants’ sense of belonging. This study showed participants were able to foster their sense of belonging through connections with Hispanic and non-Hispanic faculty of color both inside and outside of their colleges. It also showed how participants found their tenure track process to be supportive, which led to a stronger sense of belonging. Recognition from peers, administrators, and students also supported participants’ sense of belonging. However, two areas were challenging to participants sense of belonging: fitting a faculty prototype and the hiring process for faculty of color.

As a result of the study findings, colleges aiming to support faculty of color can take steps that are supportive to their sense of belonging. First, implementing systems which enable faculty, staff, administrators, and students to recognize faculty contributions can support faculty’s sense of belonging. Administrators can also adopt practices that reflect a culture of care during the tenure track process. Additionally, leadership can implement resources that allow faculty of color to connect both inside and outside of their college organization. Finally, leadership must be open to new opinions and ideas that steer their college outside of the status quo practices. When faculty of color offer new ways of thinking about college practices, they should be taken seriously as opposed to disregarded or ignored. While this study showed institutionalized practices are often difficult to reshape, some participants shared it was possible with commitment and dedication from leadership.
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Recruitment Letter

Hello (Name),

My name is Barbara Resultan and I am a doctoral candidate at the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego (USD) in Southern California. I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study exploring the experiences of tenured and tenure track Hispanic faculty at community college Hispanic-Serving Institutions, with an emphasis on participants’ sense of belonging. My study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at USD.

Participation in the study will involve a 60- to 90-minute one-on-one interview in person or via Zoom (or other online conferencing program) and possibly a 20-minute follow-up interview. Interviews will be audio recorded and all information will remain confidential.

I would appreciate your participation if you:
1. Self-identify as Hispanic/Latino
2. Are a full time tenured or tenure track faculty member
3. Work at a California community college Hispanic serving institution
4. Have been in your tenured or tenure track position for at least 2 years

If you do not meet the above criteria but know someone who does, I would appreciate you sharing this email with them.

Persons interested in participating in this study or have any questions, please contact me via email at bresultan@sandiego.edu. I very much appreciate your help with this study.

Warmly,

Barbara Resultan
APPENDIX B

Consent Form

University of San Diego Institutional Review Board
Research Participant Adult Consent Form
For the research study entitled:
Experiences of Tenured Hispanic Faculty in Community College Hispanic Serving Institutions

I. Purpose of the research study
Barbara Resultan is a student in the School of Leadership and Education Sciences at the University of San Diego. You are invited to participate in a research study she is conducting. The purpose of this research study is: to better understand the experiences of tenured and tenure track faculty of color when situated in environments with high and low racial and ethnic representation among faculty in community college settings.

II. What you will be asked to do
If you decide to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Participate in a private 60- to 90-minute interview about how ethnic/racial representation and structural and cultural factors in your college influence your experiences, particularly your sense of belonging.

You will be audio recorded during this interview.

- Participate in a brief 20-minute follow-up interview to clarify information from the initial interview, if needed.

Your participation in this study will take a total of 110 minutes.

III. Foreseeable risks or discomforts
Sometimes when people are asked to think about their feelings, they feel sad or anxious. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings at any time, you can call toll-free, 24 hours a day: San Diego County Mental Health Hotline at 1-888-724-7240

IV. Benefits
While there may be no direct benefit to you from participating in this study, the indirect benefit of participating will be knowing that you helped researchers better understand how high and low racial/ethnic representation influences experiences of faculty of color, particularly their sense of belonging.

V. Confidentiality
Any information provided and/or identifying records will remain confidential and kept in a locked file and/or password-protected computer file in the researcher’s office for a minimum of five years. All data collected from you will be coded with a number or pseudonym (fake name). Your real name will not be used. The results of this research project may be made public and information quoted in professional journals and meetings, but information from this study will only be reported as a group, and not individually.

The information or materials you provide will be cleansed of all identifiers (like your name) and may be used in future research.

VI. Compensation
You will receive no compensation for your participation in the study.

VII. Voluntary Nature of this Research
Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You do not have to do this, and you can refuse to answer any question or quit at any time. Deciding not to participate or not answering any of the questions will have no effect on any benefits you’re entitled to, like your health care, or your employment or grades. **You can withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.**

VIII. Contact Information
If you have any questions about this research, you may contact either:

1) Barbara Resultan  
   **USD Email:** bresultan@sandiego.edu

2) Lea Hubbard  
   **USD Email:** lhubbard@sandiego.edu

I have read and understand this form, and consent to the research it describes to me. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

________________________________________________________________________

Signature of Participant       Date

________________________________________________________________________

Name of Participant (Printed)

________________________________________________________________________

Signature of Investigator       Date
APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol


Scripts prior to interview:
I’d like to thank you again for being willing to participate in an interview for my study. As I mentioned to you before, my study seeks to understand how representation among Hispanic faculty at Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) impacts Hispanic tenured and tenure track faculty experiences, particularly their sense of belonging. Additionally, it seeks to understand structural and cultural factors in your HSI that support or challenge your experiences and sense of belonging. The goal of this research is to better understand experiences of faculty of color in colleges other than 4-year predominantly White institutions (PWIs), as most research has focused on this area. Our interview today will be about one hour long during which I will ask you about your journey to academia, college of employment, and sense of belonging within the college.
Prior to the interview, you completed a consent form indicating I have your permission (or not) to audio record our conversation. Are you still okay with me recording (or not) our conversation today? Yes____ No____
If yes: Thank you! Please let me know if at any point you would like me to turn off the recorder or keep something you have said off the record.
If no: Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation.
Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? (Discuss questions)
If any questions arise at any point in this study, you can feel free to ask them at any time. I would be happy to answer your questions.
Scripts after the interview:
Thank you so much for your time and willingness to participate in this interview. Your information will be combined with others who have participated in similar interviews and analyzed to create a picture of how Hispanic tenured/tenure track faculty members experience their roles in HSIs and how this impacts their sense of belonging. This will help us better understand the role of tenured/tenure track Hispanic faculty of color in environments other than PWIs and how their sense of belonging is impacted. Please feel free to contact me should you have any further questions about the study.

Introduction
What is your name?
What is your ethnicity?
What is the name of the college you work at?
How long have you worked at this college?
What led you to teach in a community college?
What led you to teach specifically at a Hispanic-Serving Institution?
What is a Hispanic-Serving Institution?
How is a Hispanic-Serving Institution different from a non-Hispanic-Serving Institution?

Research Question 1: How does the ethnic and racial representation of tenured and tenure track Hispanic faculty influence their experiences, particularly their sense of belonging?

Tenured/Tenure Track Hispanic Faculty & Sense of Belonging
Where are you in the tenure track process? (Number of reviews; expected tenure date/clock)
Describe your experience becoming a tenured/tenure track faculty member at this college.
How has your institution supported your success as a tenured/tenure track faculty member?
How many faculty of color are employed as tenured/tenure track faculty at this college? How do you think the number of tenured/tenure track faculty of color is influencing your experience at this college?
Does the number or % of faculty of color matter/affect your experience? How? Why?
How would you describe your sense of belonging at this college? Why do you think that is?
Do you think your colleagues feel the same way?
What kinds of things happen that affect your sense of belonging?

Research Question 2: What structural and cultural factors in HSIs support or challenge the experiences of tenured and tenure track Hispanic faculty, particularly their sense of belonging?

HSIs & Sense of Belonging
What are the dispositions of other faculty/administration toward having faculty of color at an HSI?
In what ways do their dispositions help to foster or undermine a sense of belonging? How? What supports, if any, are in place to help you become a tenured/tenure track faculty member at this college?
What barriers, if any, have you faced/are you facing on the way to being a tenured/tenure track faculty member?
Can you tell me about a time when you felt a real sense that you belonged at this college?
Can you tell me about a time when you really didn’t feel like you belonged at this college? What is most challenging about your experience as a tenured/tenure track Hispanic/Latino faculty member at this HSI?
What is most rewarding about your experience as a Hispanic/Latino tenured/tenure track faculty member at this HSI?

Closing
What one thing do you think could improve your feeling of belonging at this HSI? Is there anything that I didn’t ask that you would like to share?
## APPENDIX D

Sample Codes and Themes with Representative Statement Samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Codes</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Representative Statement Samples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comfort</td>
<td>Connection with Hispanic and non-Hispanic Faculty of Color Fostered a Sense of Belonging</td>
<td>“I want to make sure . . . like we feel comfortable as Latinos that everybody feels comfortable. Um, and everybody’s culture is kind of represented in the meeting.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relatability</td>
<td></td>
<td>“I primarily rely on the intellectual engagement and discussions with some of my black colleagues outside of my academic spaces.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Recognition</td>
<td>Recognition Supported Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging</td>
<td>“I received the All-time Faculty member of the Year award . . . and so that just gave me a really a strong sense of belonging.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Affirmations</td>
<td></td>
<td>“The fact that I saw that I had very good reviews from my um peers, from my students . . . That definitely makes you feel like you belong in that setting”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive Feedback</td>
<td>Tenure Process Enhanced Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging Through Care and Acceptance</td>
<td>“Hey you’re doing this, but don’t worry, we’re gonna get you help to improve. So there was always positive [feedback].”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td></td>
<td>“Uh, that's a way of showing support as well, and showing you that you belong because you have people who are genuinely rooting for you to be able to go through this tenure process and make it through successfully.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing not aligned to</td>
<td>Fitting a Faculty Prototype Challenged Hispanic</td>
<td>“This is how I dress, and this is how I want to dress and I don’t want to fit into a”</td>
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</table>
“faculty” image  Faculty’s Sense of Belonging  

Faculty’s Sense of Belonging  

certain mold, so it is somewhat intentionally, but maybe it comes with also, some consequences, too.”

Race/Age not aligned to “faculty” image  

I always get confused [that I am] a student and it is frustrating, 'cause it’s like, is it 'cause like I’m a person of color, is it 'cause I’m young? Is it both? . . . Cause it’s like a sense of like what are you doing here? Or like, this is for faculty, like you’re not a faculty member and it’s ‘cause you don’t look like one . . . I got told I was hired too young . . . like straight out people telling me . . .

FOC as threat  Faculty of Color Hiring Process Challenged Hispanic Faculty’s Sense of Belonging  

“She ended up leaving, so I think there's some threat to some of the um, the faculty staff that are Caucasian, that they're being pushed out because we're moving towards hiring, you know, faculty of color. But it's unfortunate because you know there is, there's disparity in the hiring and we're just trying to be . . . equitable . . .”

FOC as different/not a good fit  

“…I've heard a lot of horror stories of things that people say in the interview room. Once the interviewee has walked out and people would make kind of failed comments about, it's their background, their education, whatever. But it really has to do with what they are, whether it's their race, or whatever right. And so I think that it all comes down to who is in your hiring committee and why are you not um attracting more applicants.”

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Principal Investigator: Barbara Resultan
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Study History

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Key Study Contacts

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<th>Member</th>
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