Diversity in the College Composition Classroom: A Phenomenological Study of Faculty Experiences

Jessica Lorenz

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Diversity in the College Composition Classroom: A Phenomenological Study of Faculty Experiences

by

Jessica Lorenz

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

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in
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Diversity in the College Composition Classroom:
A Phenomenological Study of Faculty Experiences

by

Jessica Lorenz

This dissertation is completed as a partial requirement for the Doctor of Education (EdD) degree at the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon.

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Abstract

While faculty members in higher education contribute to curricular diversity through active learning techniques and course content, over the last decade there has not been a substantial increase in their commitments. Literature examining diversity in colleges and universities establishes who is committing to diversity and how those commitments are enacted in the classroom, but a look beyond those parameters is necessary in order to understand what influences faculty members’ decision-making. This phenomenological study was aimed at exploring the nature of faculty members’ experiences with diversity in the classroom. Three English composition instructors in the Pacific Northwest were interviewed to understand how they are experiencing diversity, and the factors influencing their commitments to diversity. Participants’ lived experiences revealed that there are rewards and challenges that come with enacting commitments to diversity. While participants perceived receiving support in their diversity efforts from internal and external influences, they also perceived experiencing barriers from influences in departments and institutions. This study concluded that exploring the nature of faculty persistence with curricular diversity has the potential to help institutions further their commitments to diversity overall.
Acknowledgements

This study would not have been possible without the support of a community of professors, colleagues, friends, and family. My committee devoted their time, energy, and hearts to this project, and these chapters came to fruition as a result of their knowledge and support. To my committee chair Dr. Sally Hood, thank you for saying yes, for going above and beyond, for supporting me through joys and challenges, and for sharing garden stories. Through your encouragement I grew as writer and researcher. To Dr. Jacqueline Waggoner, thank you for believing in me the moment I walked into your classroom and for supporting me in new ways of being as an instructor. To Dr. Randy Hetherington, thank you for inspiring me to ask tough questions and to stay curious.

To the participants of this study I am filled with gratitude, wonder, and inspiration for the stories you shared with me and for your commitments to student success. Your voices are the heart of this research.

Kieran, your insights, expertise, and encouragement made this study and my doctoral journey possible. Because of you Wednesdays always included laughter and grace—even on the toughest of days. Thank you for being my research and writing partner, and my friend.

Louise, our check-ins kept me firmly rooted when writing was trying to carry me out to shore. Thank you for reminding me that is one part of a larger journey.
To my sister in-laws—Samia, Taslim, and Fatima—thank you for being fierce supporters. Your commitments to community, equity, and family are inspiring. The poetry and your encouragement kept me going.

To Danél, for witnessing all of my personal, academic, and professional becomings. You told me over and over again that you believed in me, so I believed it too. Thank you will never seem enough.

My anajli mudra—my endless bow of eternal thankfulness—is to my parents, Cate and Jay. Through your actions you inspired me to serve others, live in gratitude, embrace challenges, and be at home within myself.

And to Nuri, for as long as we have been partners I have been pursuing my education. Thank you for supporting me in this journey in all the forms it has taken, for always making more bookshelves without hesitation, and for the space to dream big.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mom, Cate Lorenz. I remember you typing papers late into the night and then highlighting books early the next morning at the breakfast table. Persistence and love, you continue to teach me about both.

And to my grandmother, Irene Lorenz. Your garden was my original place of becoming. I carry your spirit with me, always.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Higher education is charged with the task of facilitating academic, social, and professional growth for students (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Jones, 2005; Smith & Wolf-Wendel, 2005). Colleges and universities are expected to prepare graduates to “become culturally competent citizens and leaders of a diverse democracy” (Gurin et al., 2004, p. 32). This goal necessitates significant changes for students while in college. The Higher Education Research Institute (2017) reported in the Your First College Year (YFCY) survey that 43% of freshman worked cooperatively with people from diverse groups, 34% saw the world from another’s perspective, and 28% were willing to have their views challenged. These findings from 18,529 students across 54 public and private four-year institutions indicated areas where students could benefit from further personal development. The disparity between the viewpoints expressed by college freshman and the goal of higher education to foster cultural competency suggests that colleges and universities have the opportunity to develop students’ skills in global citizenry (Evans & Chun, 2009).

The globalized economy shapes the expectations employers have of students entering the workforce after graduation. Consistent changes in technology, increased connectivity, consumer demand, investor diversity, and the need for bilingual employees have created an employment landscape that demands adaptable skills (Commission on Language Learning, 2017; Jones, 2005; New American Economy, 2017; Ulrich, Brockbank, Johnson, & Younger, 2007). In the context of “the world as a global village,” employees are expected to navigate both anticipated and unforeseen changes in the market (Ulrich et al., 2007, p. 1). To meet these demands, organizations
are looking for professionals who can adapt to organizational “intangibles” specific to the industries in which they work (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2003). Defined as factors such as innovation, culture, and collaboration, intangibles represent the invisible values promoted from within an organization (Ulrich & Smallwood, 2003, 2005). It is essential that higher education prepare students with skills in cultural understanding and broad social interaction to respond to the demands of the globalized employment market (Jones, 2005; Smith & Wolf-Wendel, 2005; Zlmoslić, Gverijeri, & Bugarić, 2016).

Exposure to difference is key in preparing students to become participants and leaders in a democratic society (Gurin, Day, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). In the context of preparing students to operate in a globalized economy, the experience of interacting with diverse groups of people develops the necessary capacity for cross-cultural understanding and collaboration (Chun & Evans, 2009). The increasingly insular nature of American communities and schools highlights the important potential of the higher education classroom as a setting for new experiences (Denson, Bowman, & Park, 2002; Gurin et al., 2002; Orfield, 2009; Putnam, 2015). Through colleges and universities, students are offered a space that “is often considerably more diverse than students’ precollege environments” (Bowman, 2014, p. 280). The exposure to difference on campus helps to prepare students for the diversity they will encounter in the workplace (Ulrich et al., 2007).

Diversity in higher education is a complex system that emerges through three main areas of concentration: structural, curricular, and interactional diversity. Structurally, diversity is expressed through fixed categories (e.g. race and gender) and
measured by the compositional representation of students, faculty, staff, and administration (Chun & Evans, 2009; Gurin, et al., 2002; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1999; Smith, 2009). The compositional proportion of students and faculty in higher education indicates substantial differences in representation. In the fall of 2015, 42% of college students identified as White, 35% Black, 37% Hispanic, 63% Asian, 24% Pacific Islander, 23% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 38% identified with two or more racial categories (NCES, 2016). Of full-time faculty, White males represented the largest majority at 41% and White females the second largest majority at 35% (NCES, 2017). Black males represented 3% of faculty, Black females 3%, Hispanic males 3%, Hispanic females 2%, Asian/Pacific Islander males 6%, and Asian/Pacific Islander females 4% (NCES, 2017). The percentage of faculty identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native and two or more racial categories was less than one percent. As faculty rise in tenure from assistant to full professor there is decrease in the representation of White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander female faculty, as well as decrease in representation for Black and Hispanic male faculty (NCES, 2017). The proportional variance in racial identity between students and faculty highlights the importance of diversity in the classroom and on campus.

Although structural diversity is essential to promoting equity (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005), it is not sufficient to ensure engaged interactions between diverse groups (Gurin et al., 2002). The promotion of diversity in the classroom through coursework and pedagogy is defined as curricular diversity (Gurin et al., 2002). This form of diversity emphasizes the opportunities that result from exposure to diverse perspectives and diverse peers (Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Bjorklund, & Parente,
While curricular diversity establishes intentional contact between diverse groups (Terenzini et al., 2001), interactional diversity focuses on the informal relationships that occur as a result of a diverse composition of students on campus (Gurin et al., 2002). Interactional diversity is labeled as *in situ* with the expectation that engagement between diverse groups occurs naturally in campus life outside of the classroom (Terenzini et al., 2001).

As diversity is carried out structurally, through curriculum, and through social interactions in higher education, discussion about the meaning of the term ‘diversity’ emerges. Diversity “refers to characteristics that differentiate individuals such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, generational differences, and religious beliefs (Evans & Chun, 2009, p. 3). While this definition deals with the presence of difference, a secondary meaning surfaces that focuses on diversity as a pathway for increasing equity in colleges and universities (Owen, 2009). This definition focuses on “the differences that differences make” in order to empower organizational change (Owen, 2009, p. 187). Efforts to measure the impact of curricular diversity indicate that incorporation of diverse perspectives in coursework influences student development. In an assessment of changes that students experience between freshman and sophomore year, Hurtado (2005) indicated that social development occurred in relation to courses that contained readings on different racial and ethnic groups. The survey of 4,403 students from nine public institutions found that those courses were related to increased cultural awareness, concern for the public good, and support for race-based initiatives, and they were related to decreased
acceptance of social inequity (Hurtado, 2005). The results of the study suggest that student growth through the experience of diverse curriculum is possible.

College composition courses stand at the intersection between globalization and diversity. Composition is the most commonly required general education course on college campuses (Adelman, 2004). A survey of 718 public and private colleges and universities across all fifty states revealed that 78% have a composition requirement in their general education curriculum (ACTA, 2010). While one goal of college writing courses is to provide students with the tools to write successfully across disciplines, another objective aimed at preparing students “for the demands of democratic citizenship” exists (Giles, 2002, p. 8). The route to achieving the first goal is clearly illustrated by the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) and the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in the guidelines and recommendations for instructors. The pathway for composition instructors to fulfill the goal of democratic citizenry is made less clear, however, despite the call to increase curricular diversity (Evans & Chun, 2009; Gurin et al., 2004; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2017; Nelson Laird, Hurtado, & Yuhas, 2018).

Literature examining faculty diversity establishes who is committing to diversity and how those commitments are enacted in the classroom. Female faculty, minority faculty, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning, and asexual (LGBQA) faculty are more likely to incorporate curricular diversity, as are faculty in the disciplines of the arts, humanities, social sciences, education, communication, and public relations (Nelson Laird, 2011; Nelson Laird, Hurtado & Yuhas, 2018). The assessment of practices of active learning and student engagement indicate that faculty
members invest in and promote diversity through the environment of their classroom, the content of curriculum, their techniques for encouraging participation, and through the evaluation of student learning (Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006; Nelson Laird, 2011; Nelson Laird, Hurtado, & Yuhas, 2018). However, according to the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2017) from full and part-time faculty across 100 public and private institutions, curricular diversity has not increased over the past decade (Nelson Laird, Hurtado & Yuhas, 2018). A look beyond who and how is necessary in order to understand the factors that influence faculty members in their decisions to include diversity in their professional activities.

**Statement of the Problem**

The majority of college students will enroll in a college composition course during their academic careers (ACTA, 2010). Although the WPA and the CCCC provide guidelines for student writing outcomes and instructor professional development, the pathway for encouraging students to become democratic citizens is left up to instructor determination. Predictors of faculty members’ commitments to diversity based on the demographics of gender, race, and field of discipline are present in the literature; yet, the nature of how faculty are impacted by the climate of society, the institution, field of discipline, and department is less apparent (Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006; Nelson Laird, 2011; Nelson Laird, Hurtado & Yuhas, 2018). An exploration of factors that influence faculty decision-making is necessary to support institutional commitments to diversity (Chun & Evans, 2009; Evans & Chun, 2007). While the demand for developing students’ skills in global citizenry remains (Evans & Chun, 2009; Gurin et al., 2004), an understanding of what motivates and presents
barriers to composition instructors’ commitments to diversity would be beneficial to increasing the answer to that call.

**Research Gap**

The decision by college and university faculty members to include diversity in their courses is not made in isolation. While models in organizational leadership focus on the internal, external, and organizational elements that influence employee diversity commitments (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003; Loden, 1995), the culture of academia combined with the decision-making structure of higher education necessitate an understanding of factors that are unique to colleges and universities (Austin, 1990; Birnbaum, 1988). Although faculty identity is considered in relation to teaching in campus racial climate models (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998, 1999; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005), the specific factors of influence that shape diversity commitments in teaching, research, and service are not offered. In order to empower faculty members’ commitments to curricular diversity, an understanding of the connection between internal and external factors of influence is advantageous (Chun & Evans, 2009; Evans & Chun, 2007).

Current evaluations of faculty members’ diversity efforts focus on the quantitative assessment of climate and curriculum. While some surveys measure faculty perceptions of institutional, disciplinary, and departmental structures overall, others focus exclusively on observations of how institutions are responding to needs that range from diversity, student academic support, and teaching loads. Diversity representation in curriculum is predominately reported through active teaching methods and the incorporation of diverse content. The lack of qualitative assessment
exploring the implementation of curricular diversity limits the understanding of how departments and institutions can further their missions to promote equity. This study will address this gap through a phenomenological exploration of the factors of influence on faculty members’ commitments to diversity.

**Audience**

This study provides insight on the internal and external factors that empower and constrain faculty in including diversity in the framework of their courses (Chun & Evans, 2009; Evans & Chun, 2007). A greater understanding of these factors contributes to the development of faculty as vital “intellectual capital” that sustains an institution and drives growth (Ulrich, 1998). Chun and Evans (2009) note, “Typically more than three-quarters of a university’s resources are expended in personnel costs” (p. 31). To ensure that innovative and diverse faculty members are recruited and retained, it is necessary for institutional and departmental structures to operationalize diversity goals (Chun & Evans, 2009). Faculty, administrators, and students benefit from commitments to diversity enacted through curricular practices, organizational structures, and assessments (Chun & Evans, 2009; Evans & Chun, 2007).

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to explore the diversity experiences of English composition faculty members who teach in colleges in the Pacific Northwest. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How are English composition faculty members experiencing diversity?
2. How are English composition faculty members describing the factors influencing their commitments to diversity?
Conceptual Framework

Chesler, Lewis, and Crowfoot’s (2005) model outlines a multidimensional framework that encompasses personal, institutional, and societal contexts of influence on faculty approaches to diversity (see Figure 1). A faculty member’s individual perspective on diverse teaching is influenced primarily by personal connections to social identity (e.g., race, gender, social class), familial situation, self-knowledge and skills, and beliefs about diversity. The secondary influence results from perceptions of characteristics of students, the classroom, department, discipline, and institution. The third layer is shaped by national and community culture, and the interpretation of the dynamics of oppression in society. The model identifies key elements in the faculty decision-making process.

Theoretical Framework

Chesler et al.’s (2005) model of influences suggests that examining the experience of faculty across internal and external contexts provides a more holistic approach to understanding decision-making. The theory of reciprocal empowerment provides support for implementing an assessment of faculty diversity to evaluate institutional structures, policies, culture, and practices that perpetuate oppression and prevent the operationalization of diversity (Evans & Chun, 2007; Chun & Evans, 2009). As a driver of exclusion, oppression prevents access to resources that enable personal and professional success (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). To promote commitments to diversity in higher education it is necessary to implement assessment strategies that directly measure inputs of individual empowerment (Chun & Evans, 2009; Evans & Chun, 2007).
Figure 1. Forces Influencing Faculty Approaches to Diversity and Multiculturalism in Classroom Teaching (Chesler et al., 2005)

The model of reciprocal empowerment developed by Chun and Evans (2009) highlights the multidimensional nature of organizational structures that support commitments to diversity (see Figure 2). The values of self-determination, distributive justice, and collaboration and democratic participation form the foundation of reciprocal empowerment. Prilleltensky and Gonick (1996) preface the definition to each of these values with the phrase “power to give to self and others equal,” fostering both individual autonomy and collective equity (p. 130). Self-determination is the
ability to define identity, and distributive justice is access to resources (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). The third value of collaboration and democratic participation refers to the involvement of all voices in society (Chun & Evans, 2009; Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996).

Figure 2. Framework of Reciprocal Empowerment (Evans & Chun, 2009)

Six factors of organizational influence are represented in the reciprocal empowerment model (Evans & Chun, 2007). The frame of demography, diversity, and democracy emphasizes the importance of committing to structural shifts to promote the full and active participation of minorities and women in education (Evans & Chun, 2007). Changing student demographics and the legal support of affirmative action and race-conscious admissions policies situate diversity as a necessary commitment in higher education (Chun & Evans, 2009; Evans & Chun, 2007; Gurin, 1999). The
cultural and climate input emphasizes that support for diversity must be established within the administrative, faculty, and staff communities in order to support structural principles (Evans & Chun, 2007). Identifying barriers to diversity within the cultural contexts of the institution, academic disciplines, and talent groups leads to greater understanding of how to support opportunities to grow diversity efforts. By separating the mentorship of minorities and women from the input of access and resources, a significant importance is placed on the value of developing networks. Evans and Chun (2007) highlight that diverse formal and informal networks provide support and encourage the sharing of perspectives. Diversity as a consciousness-raising process is embedded in the model of reciprocal empowerment (Chun & Evans, 2009; Evans & Chun, 2007).

Key to the reciprocal empowerment framework is the celebration of diverse interests. Evans and Chun (2007) suggest that this can be expressed through restructuring the elements of research and service in the tenure track. Broadening scholarship to include cooperative and interdisciplinary research, expanding service to incorporate institutional and community activities, and embracing mentorship as service are starting points to celebrating diversity (Evans & Chun, 2007). The factor of access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making focuses on the development of strategic plans to engage “accountability, budget and infrastructure, assessment, channels for collective campus input, and concrete objectives and time lines” (Chun & Evans, 2009, p. 49). The sixth and final element in the framework is an environment that promotes true diversity. This speaks to diversity that moves beyond demographics
to build a community that encourages and supports professional and personal growth (Evans & Chun, 2007).

**Definitions**

Table 1 indicates definitions for key terms and phrases operationalized throughout the study.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term/Phrase</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration and democratic participation</td>
<td>Power to give to self and others an equal voice in society (Prilleltensky &amp; Gonick, 1996, p.130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curricular diversity</td>
<td>The promotion of diversity in the classroom through coursework and pedagogy (Gurin et al., 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributive justice</td>
<td>Power to give to self and others equal and sufficient resources (Prilleltensky &amp; Gonick, 1996, p. 130)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>The characteristics that differentiate individuals such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, generational differences, and religious beliefs (Evans &amp; Chun, 2009, p. 3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppression</td>
<td>A state of asymmetric power relations characterized by domination, subordination, and resistance, where the dominating persons or groups exercise their power by restricting access to material resources and by implanting in subordinated persons or groups fear or self-deprecating views about themselves (Prilleltensky &amp; Gonick, 1996, p.129)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reciprocal empowerment</td>
<td>The combined values of self-determination, distributive justice, collaboration and democratic participation (Prilleltensky &amp; Gonick, 1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-determination</td>
<td>Power to give to self and others equal ability to define identity (Prilleltensky &amp; Gonick, 1996, p.130)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Significance

To successfully serve a diverse student body and prepare students as democratic and global citizens (Chun & Evans, 2009; Gurin et al., 2002; Gurin et al., 2004) institutions of higher education are increasingly expecting faculty to include diversity in their course curriculum and practices (Austin & Wulff, 2004; Jones, 2005; Smith, 2009; Smith & Wolf-Wendel, 2005). While faculty are committing to diversity through teaching (Eagan et al., 2014; Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006; Nelson Laird, 2011), an understanding of the internal and external factors shaping those commitments would benefit the development of organizational structures that empower diversity in higher education (Chun & Evans, 2009; Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003; Evans & Chun, 2007; Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). An exploration of the nature of diversity experiences of English composition faculty members could be utilized to effectively support faculty decision-making and help transform education to meet the needs of the 21st century global workforce (Chun & Evans, 2009).

Summary

In this chapter the necessity of developing students’ global skills to foster their success in the workforce was introduced, and research on faculty commitments to curricular diversity was explored in brief. A gap in the qualitative assessment of curricular diversity was noted, and the importance of understanding the diversity experiences of English composition faculty members was highlighted. The audience, purpose, research questions, and significance of the study were presented, and an
overview of the conceptual and theoretical framework was established. Chapter Two will address the context of diversity in higher education and provide an in-depth examination of the literature on faculty members’ commitments to diversity. Chapter Three will provide the methodology, sampling, and data gathering and analysis of the study. The findings are explored in Chapter Four, and the discussion, implications, and the conclusion are addressed in Chapter Five.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will begin with a review of the legal debates concerning race-conscious college admissions and the organizational structures in higher education that impact decision-making. The relationship between faculty identity and Chesler et al.’s (2005) forces of influence model will be discussed, and literature on the characteristics, persistence, and barriers to faculty commitments to diversity will be examined. The theory of reciprocal empowerment and its relationship to instruments assessing faculty diversity will be reviewed. Finally, an exploration of diversity assessment practices in higher education will be presented.

Diversity in Higher Education

For over 40 years, the role of diversity in college and university admissions has been a contentious legal landscape. Regents of the University of California. v. Bakke (1978) established that race could be one of the factors considered in college admissions. This was challenged in Hopwood v. Texas (1996) when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit upheld that race could not be used to determine admissions eligibility in the states of Texas, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Seven years later that was overturned in Grutter v. Bollinger (2003) where it was ruled that diversity was a compelling state interest and that race could be used as one of the factors in admissions review. Delivering the opinion of the Court, Justice O’Connor stated that education “must be inclusive of talented and qualified individuals of every race and ethnicity, so that all members of our heterogeneous society may participate in the educational institutions that provide the training and education necessary to succeed in America” (Grutter v. Bollinger, 2003). While O’Connor’s opinion affirmed
a connection between race-conscious admissions, access to education, and democratic citizenry, challenges to affirmative action in admissions continue.

Since 1996, eight states have enacted affirmative action bans that prohibit the consideration of race and gender in admissions in public universities. In the most recent legal debate over admissions, *Fischer v. University of Texas* (2016) ruled that race-conscious policies were permitted under the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. In the opinion of the Court, Justice Kennedy stated, “it remains an enduring challenge to our Nation’s education system to reconcile the pursuit of diversity with the constitutional promise of equal treatment and dignity” (*Fischer v. University of Texas*, 2016). The post-Bakke and Fischer climate highlights the opportunity in higher education to build institutional excellence through diversity (Chun & Evans, 2009).

Operationalizing diversity in institutional structure and culture begins with the goals expressed through mission and vision statements (Chun & Evans, 2009). A study of mission statements from 80 public higher education institutions indicates that 74% include references to diversity, and 65% have additional diversity statements (Wilson, Meyer, & McNeal, 2012). The 80 institutions in the study equally represent public research, master’s, baccalaureate, and community colleges across the four geographic regions of the United States. Two themes emerge in the mission statements that include diversity references: shifting demographics of students and cultural diversity. These areas of emphasis speak to the realities of changing student populations and the importance of fostering diverse, global skills (Chun & Evans, 2009; Williams & Clowney, 2007). Once mission statements have attracted students,
the work of committing to diversity begins within organizational structure (Chun & Evans, 2009).

**Structures of Power in Higher Education**

Organizational structures of power have a direct impact on how diversity is operationalized within the decision-making processes and culture in an institution (Chun & Evans, 2009; Williams & Clowney, 2007). Academic structures of power are based on shared governance between trustees, campus presidents, administrators, and faculty (Birnbaum, 1988). As a producer of influence and change, power can be exercised through many forms in professional organizations (Birnbaum, 1988; Raven, 2008). The bases of power model developed by French and Raven (1959; Raven, 1965) outlined six types of power enacted in social groups: informational, reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, and referent. Informational power inspires learning and change through the exchange of information between parties (Raven, 2008). Reward-based power utilizes incentives to influence outcomes, and coercive power enforces change through penalties (Raven, 2008). Legitimate power is based on the agreement between all parties to comply with standards (Birnbaum, 1988; Raven, 2008). Expert power is established through the acceptance that one individual is equipped with knowledge and experiences to make decisions, while referent power results when one party accepts change in order to imitate and identify more closely with the party of influence (Raven, 2008). The nature of exchange in each of these six types of power is dependent upon the social hierarchy enacted between the ‘agent’ and the ‘target’ (Raven, 2008).
Birnbaum (1988) suggested that the choice between forms of power is contingent on organizational type. Drawing on Etzioni’s (1961) theory of coercive, utilitarian, and normative organizational patterns, power is based on an organization’s approach to the achievement of goals (Birnbaum, 1988). Coercive organizations (e.g. prisons) use coercive power, while utilitarian organizations (e.g. businesses) typically use reward and legitimate power to enact change (Birnbaum, 1988). Colleges and universities, as normative structures, implement informational, expert, and referent forms of power (Birnbaum, 1998). However, increasing measures of accountability through external pressures of accreditation, finance, and globalization have altered this landscape (Altbach, 1998; Chun & Evans, 2009). The balance between administrative and professorial authority provides an opportunity to examine the institutional organization of higher education as multidimensional system of combined cultures (Birnbaum, 1988).

Bergquist’s (1992; Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008) study of academic cultures posited that colleges and universities contain six cultural identities: collegial, managerial, developmental, advocacy, virtual, and tangible. Collegial culture is operationalized by faculty through teaching, research, and governance (Bergquisit, 1992; Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). Shared values of the professoriate are expressed in this culture, as well as the subcultural contexts of the disciplines (Becher, 2001; Bergquisit, 1992; Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008; Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Managerial culture emphasizes structures of organization and the implementation of policy while valuing supervision and financial accountability (Bergquist, 1992; Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008). The culture of development is inspired by individual, collective, and organizational
growth and values communication, service, and planning. The advocacy culture is inspired by the history of faculty unions, collective bargaining, and academic freedom, and it encourages an investment in the development of faculty, students, curriculum, and research. Virtual culture is based on the examination of knowledge exchange and identity formulation in the digital age, and the relationship of “educational resources to global and technological resources” (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2008, p. 147). The tangible culture is engrained in the legacy of the institutional promise of learning and the values of tradition and community.

The six cultures of the academy and the combined forms of organizational power indicate the complexity of cultures in higher education. Through the binary relationships of independence/dependence, empower/control, and the individual/collective, a hierarchical structure of cultural and organizational framework is fostered (Tierney, 1989). Faculty decision-making in this framework is influenced by institutional and disciplinary commitments that shape professional identity (Chesler et al., 2005).

**Faculty Identity and Culture**

Ambiguity concerning the role of faculty members is acknowledged throughout scholarship examining the profession. Wilson (1942) stated, “Basic functions of academicians everywhere are the conservation, dissemination, and innovation of knowledge. So varied and complex are these tasks however, that the English language has no precise generic word for the functionary” (p. 3). The question of whether to define faculty members through common values or their primary tasks persists. Clark (1963) noted, “Faculty cultures have so many segments, and only a few
aspects can be caught in any one net, no matter how fine the webbing of the net or how large its size” (p. 40). Characterized by complexity, faculty members’ identities are multidimensional in nature. Exploring the impact of faculty culture on professional identity, Metzger (1987) explained:

Contemporary American academics belong to four occupational entities: to the field of higher education, to the institution that employs them, to a faculty within that institution and by extension to faculties in general, and to a particular discipline. Analysts commonly agree that only the last two entities plausibly define the boundaries of a profession. But they do not agree on which entity—the faculty or the discipline—is the major axis of academic professionalism, or on whether clashing, divided, or mutually reinforcing loyalties are felt by academics who belong to both. (p. 160)

The discussion of loyalty suggests that the dimensions of collegial and disciplinary belonging have the potential to profoundly influence faculty decision-making. The ambiguous, complex, and multidimensional contexts of the professoriate indicate that an increased understanding of faculty member’s identities would benefit the understanding of faculty decision-making.

Faculty culture is shaped by a juxtaposition of unifying principles and differences in disciplinary fields (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Three values create a foundation of commonality between academics: the facilitation of learning, autonomy in academic work, and collegiality (Bowen & Schuster, 1986; Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Grounded in learning as the foundation of higher education, the first value commits to the exploration and transmission of knowledge through teaching and research.
Autonomy in academic work ensures that faculty retain the freedom to pursue and contribute to learning through the development of structures such as peer review and tenure. Collegiality provides support through community and faculty governance, and these structures become increasingly more important as external forces of influence impact academia (Altbach, 1998; Bowen & Schuster, 1986; Kuh & Whitt, 1988).

While the collective culture encompassed in the three values creates a homogenous perspective of the professoriate, variation exists between academic disciplines (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Tierney (1989) posited, “The culture of the profession transcends disciplines and institutions” (p. 84), yet field of discipline as a defining faculty subculture persists (Becher, 2001; Kuh & Whitt, 1988). The language, values, and traditions within a field foster meaning and create a sense of community (Becher, 2001; Kuh & Whitt, 1988). It is the field of study that inspires students to become academic professionals, and it is through the field that they become socialized to the profession (Ruscio, 1987). Institutional affiliation occurs after faculty members are immersed in disciplinary scholarship. When they become a part of an institution, the department becomes the point of convergence between the discipline and the institution (Clark, 1987). The dynamics of this convergence have been characterized by varying degrees of difference between the two dimensions.

Differences in institutional types, mission and vision commitments, and professional appointments impact faculty identity (Clark, 1987; Ruscio, 1987). Kuh and Whitt (1988) offer an illustration of differences between faculty members’ employment appointments:
For example, a faculty member in a liberal arts college is likely to have a heavy teaching load, work primarily with undergraduates who have relatively shallow knowledge of the subject area, be a part of a small department that lacks colleagues of similar special interests, and have opportunities to collaborate with colleagues in different disciplines. (p. 79)

The experience of this faculty member differs greatly from the experience of a faculty member whose primary role is research and mentorship of graduate students. Teaching and research loads are directly impacted by institutional type (Clark 1987; Ruscio, 1987). Although engagement in both activities is found across all sectors from research universities to community colleges, institutional type influences the degree to which faculty members divide their time (Ruscio, 1987). Support of faculty members through professional development is also impacted by employment status. In the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW) 2010 report, 27% of part-time faculty members reported receiving teacher-development workshops. While the percentage was higher for contingent faculty members working in two-year institutions (38%) than in Baccalaureate institutions (19%), the availability of research grants across all Carnegie institutional types was low for part-time faculty overall at 11% (CAW, 2010). Division of labor based on institutional sector, discipline, and academic rank significantly influences identity and culture in the professoriate by establishing collegiality and decision-making control (Clark, 1987; Ruscio, 1987).

**The Path of College Composition**

Since its beginnings, English composition as field of discipline has held a contentious space in the academy. The first standardized freshman composition
course, known as English A, began in Harvard in the late 1880s (Brereton, 1996).

Between 1880 and 1910, Harvard developed the first college program to focus exclusively on freshman through senior level writing (Brereton, 1996). The instructors of these courses were prominent rhetoricians and doctoral students who focused their energy on teaching rather than research (Brereton, 1996). The Harvard writing faculty members were “some of the most famous scholars and critics in America devoted the best part of their intellectual energy to student writing. There has never been anything like it” (Brereton, 1996, p. 11). In 1911 with the convening of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the dialogue on composition courses in American colleges began to examine issues surrounding the role of writing instruction and writing instructors.

The NCTE was established “to increase effectiveness of school and college work in English” (1912, p. 31). The council developed out of concerns in the early 1900s for the increasing college entrance requirements for English composition. Through the council there became a dedicated, formal space for conversations about the pipeline between high school and college English (Hook, 1979). In the notes from the first meeting in December 1911, faculty members spoke to issues of isolation and growing tensions between high school and college faculty. Council member Professor Clapp explained, “While individuality is most desirable in education, our present isolation is wasteful and injurious. We should all be benefited by having a strong and widely extended organization of our own” (as cited in NCTE, 1912, p. 38). It was insisted that the organization have representative members from elementary school, high school, and college English (NCTE, 1912). Council member Professor Squires
began a discussion of college entrance requirements with the statement, “I belong to that much-criticized class, the college professors of English, and certainly feel very humble in this presence” (as cited in NCTE, 1912, p. 45). While the proceedings from the first NCTE meeting revealed a contrast between high school and college teachers of English, later meetings spoke to growing tensions between composition and literature instructors in the professoriate.

Since the establishment of the Harvard writing program, composition courses have been under the umbrella of English departments (Giles, 2002). In early discussions of professional status a contrast emerged between instructors of composition and instructors of literature. Cunliffe (1912) described, “In certain institutions, under present conditions, the teacher of literature enjoys a position of greater comfort and prestige” (p. 592). The juxtaposition between the teaching of literature and composition that was observed at the beginning of the 20th century persists today. It is noted,

Despite their nearly universal presence on campuses across the country, composition courses continue to enjoy something less than permanent status within many English departments. At large universities, they are the courses most likely taught by short-term graduate student faculty. At midsized universities…they are the courses most likely to be taught by part-time adjunct faculty or non-tenure-track full-time faculty. The same is true at many small liberal arts colleges. (Giles, 2002, p. 2)

Since 1975, the reliance on contingent and full-time non-tenure-track faculty has increased across the academy (American Association of University Professors, 2017).
It is now estimated that over 70% of faculty members are part-time (American Association of University Professors, 2017). The part-time status of composition faculty was observed in a 2010 study by the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW). The survey of 10,331 part-time faculty members indicated that humanities faculty members represented 42% of the contingent workforce, and 16% specifically taught in the discipline of English language and literature (CAW, 2010). The disparity in pay between tenure-track and part-time faculty that is seen across disciplines is also present for composition instructors. The average salary for an assistant professor at a four-year public institution is reported to be $76,000 a year and at two-year public institutions $61,000 a year (Chronicle Data, 2017-2018). In contrast, part-time English faculty reported receiving on average $3,098 per course at four-year public institutions and $2,378 per course at two-year public institutions (Chronicle Data, 2017-2018).

While college composition courses serve a large majority of students in two-year and four-year higher education (ACTA, 2010; Adelman, 2004), professional development for instructors remains ambiguous. Yancey (2002) explains of English composition,

> It's a discipline that has ardently served the needs of one population while attending little to another. More specifically, we’ve focused on how to teach students to write, while thinking very little, at least systematically, about the kinds of assistance we might offer … instructors. (p. 63)

Through the history of the field of English composition it is noted that while faculty are vital to the enterprise of teaching writing, they are marginalized through a lack of a sense of place in departments, in their employment status, and through professional
development (CAW, 2010; Giles, 2002; NCTE, 1912; Yancey, 2002). The “spirit of inquiry” noted by Taylor (1929, p. 3) remains consistent for English composition faculty, writing program administrators, and English departments as the discipline continues to take shape under the call to increase curricular diversity.

**A Model for Faculty Decision-Making**

The contrasts between unified and diversified values, dominant and subcultural systems, and stratified divisions of labor highlight the need for examining faculty decision-making through a multidimensional lens. Understanding the extent to which internal and external factors empower or challenge faculty commitments to diversity is a necessary step in operationalizing diversity in the classroom as well as through research and service (Evans & Chun, 2007; Chun & Evans, 2009). To gain this perspective, a framework investigating the dimensions of personal, disciplinary, institutional, and socio-political influences is essential. Chesler et al.’s (2005) model examines external influences from society on institutions of higher education (Altbach, 1998; Ruscio, 1987), influences from the structure of the institution and discipline (Clark 1987; Ruscio, 1987), and factors of personal identity (Weinstein & Obear, 1992). In developing the model, it was discovered that faculty experienced personal, pedagogical, curricular, and structural barriers to success while committing to diversity. Study of these four internal and external dimensions is crucial to understanding how the professoriate and diversity are evolving (Altbach, 1998; Austin & Wulff, 2004; Ruscio, 1987).
Personal Perception

Operationalizing self-confidence is an important factor in committing to diversity in course framework (Weinstein & Obear, 1992). Faculty members’ responses to curricular diversity were first measured by Maruyama and Moreno (2000) in a study of 1,210 randomly selected faculty members from the fields of social science, humanities, education, business, and interdisciplinary programs at Carnegie Classified Research-I institutions. Eighty-five percent of the sample identified as White, and 94% were full-time employees. While a majority of faculty felt prepared and comfortable to teach and work in environments that were structurally diverse, only one-third initiated discussions of race in class and assigned students to work in groups with diverse peers. A contrast between feeling prepared for curricular diversity and enacting it emerged, as well as differences in faculty characteristics. Non-White faculty felt more prepared to interact with diverse curriculum than White faculty (Maruyama & Moreno, 2000).

Issues surrounding lack of preparedness persist with curricular diversity. In the 2016-2017 Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey of over 20,000 faculty members across 143 four-year colleges and universities, over half of respondents believed that faculty are underprepared to handle conflict over diversity issues in the classroom (Stolzenberg et al., 2019). In Nelson Laird et al.’s (2018) analysis of the 2017 Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE) from 42 institutions across Carnegie classifications, 54% of faculty members regularly explored their own cultural and intellectual limitations to prepare for a course, and 49% regularly addressed their potential biases about course-related issues during class
Of the 4,468 faculty members surveyed, 71% identified as White, 56% taught upper division courses, and 84% were full time. The results of the 2007 FSSE (Nelson Laird, 2011) reported similar percentages in the exploration of cultural limitations (53%) and address of potential bias (42%). A comparison between the 2007 and 2017 results indicates little change has occurred in faculty members’ internal commitments to diversity (Nelson Laird et al., 2018).

The majority of college educators are not trained to address issues that arise when implementing curricular diversity (Bell, Love, Washington, & Weinstein, 1997; Considine, Mihalick, Mogi-Hein, Penick- Parks, & Auken, 2014; Weinstein & Obear, 1992). Their preparation for that role begins in graduate school as doctoral students navigating the culture of the academy (Austin & Wulff, 2004; Austin, 2002; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). Skills in teaching are learned mainly through observations of undergraduate and graduate professors (Austin, 2004, 2002), and the mimetic nature of this learning highlights a deficit in “systematic, developmental preparation for the faculty career” (Austin, 2002, p. 105). In a survey of 4,114 doctoral students in their third year or beyond of doctoral studies, Golde and Dore (2001) found that while they felt prepared by their programs to conduct research, they also felt substantially less equipped for creating inclusive classroom environments. Lack of knowledge about teaching strategies makes it challenging for faculty members to incorporate the culturally responsive pedagogies required to successfully serve a diverse body of learners (Considine et al., 2014; Austin & Wulff, 2004).

Dynamics of intrapersonal identity are influenced when discussions of racism, bias, and privilege enter the classroom (Weinstein & Obear, 1992). The term “culture
“shock” is employed to describe the perceptions of faculty as they confront their limitations as individuals and educators (Weinstein & Obear, 1992, p. 3). As a result of this inner conflict, fear is reported in the form of losing self-identity, marginalizing students, and losing control of the classroom (Weinstein & Obear, 1992). Barriers experienced in this process of self-reflection are connected to the predictability and reassurance of the instructional environment (Weinstein & Obear, 1992). Classroom settings that evoke familiarity for faculty affirm professional identity, while classrooms that provoke unknown student responses have the potential to trigger stressed-based reactions that call professional identity into question (Weinstein & Obear, 1992). Yet despite personal barriers, faculty commit to fostering diverse pedagogical practices in the classroom (Eagan et al., 2014; Nelson Laird, 2011; Nelson Laird et al., 2018).

**Pedagogy**

Studies measuring the outcomes of classroom practices that promote diversity focus on three main areas of concentration: active learning, faculty characteristics, and course adaptation. The large body of literature on active learning examines the relationship between classroom activities that promote student engagement and outcomes that encourage interaction between diverse peers. Astin (1993) defined active learning through the elements of “cooperative learning, student presentations, group projects, experiential learning, independent projects, student-selected topics for course content, class discussions, and student-developed activities” (p. 38). These techniques foster responsibility within learners and encourage collaboration between students in the classroom (Astin, 1993; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen,
A particular emphasis is placed on cooperative learning as a method for ensuring equitable peer interactions (Hurtado, 2002; Slavin, 1995).

Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Bjorklund, and Parente (2001) reported that collaborative learning and interaction with the instructor has a stronger influence on the development of students’ problem-solving and group skills than structural diversity in the classroom. Likewise, Saenz, Ngai, and Hurtado (2007) found that positive interactions between African American, Asian, Latino, and White students were fostered during intensive dialogues between students of different backgrounds in class. Faculty members’ interest in student development was also noted as a significant predictor of positive interaction across races for African American and White students (Saenz, Ngai, & Hurtado, 2007). The studies of Terenzini et al. (2001) and Saenz, Ngai, and Hurtado (2007) suggest that an examination of the extent to which faculty employ active learning is beneficial to understanding commitments to diversity.

The use of active learning techniques dramatically increased between 2000 and 2011. Maruyama and Moreno’s (2000) study found that 53% of faculty members did not agree that the presence of diverse students in classrooms prompted them to make pedagogical changes to encourage discussion among students, and even less (66%) agreed that the presence of diverse students on campus prompted changes to pedagogy. Nelson Laird’s (2011) findings showed considerable growth with 87% of faculty members frequently trying to empower students through class participation. Seventy-five percent of faculty members regularly varied their teaching methods to encourage active participation of all students, and 96% frequently worked on creating a classroom environment that was conducive to student learning (Nelson Laird, 2011).
Two scales—diversity grounding and inclusive learning—and 12 survey items were established to measure the extent to which faculty operationalize diversity. Rooted in models from course planning, multicultural education, and feminist theory, Nelson Laird (2011) distinctly points out that the survey items resist “simple determinations about what is and what is not a diversity course” and create the opportunity to evaluate the various pathways for diversity to enter a course (p. 573).

Data compiled by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) from faculty surveys administered between 1989 and 2014 supports the growth in active learning techniques indicated between Maruyama and Moreno (2000) and Nelson Laird’s (2011) studies (see Figure 3). While 51% of faculty members in 2013-2014 reported heavy use of lecturing in courses, growth is seen over the past 25 years in practices promoting collaboration and student-agency (Eagan et al., 2014). Cooperative learning is utilized by over 60% of faculty members, and 45% of faculty members include group projects in their course framework (Eagan et al., 2014). The implementation of student evaluations in peer assessment has risen by 18%, as has the use of student-selected course content (Eagan et al., 2014).

While engagement with active learning has increased, measures of identity characteristics in relation to diversity have resulted in consistent outcomes. Female, minority, and LGBQA faculty members report higher frequencies of engagement with active learning (Milem, 2001; Hurtado, 2002; Umbach, 2006; Nelson Laird, 2011; Nelson Laird et al., 2018). Disciplinary differences also have emerged in national faculty surveys over time. In the HERI faculty survey between 1992 and 1993, Milem (2001) found that faculty members in soft-pure disciplines had a higher likelihood of
employing active learning techniques, and Nelson Laird (2011) reported through the FSSE sample in 2007 that soft-pure-life and hard-applied-non-life faculty members also had increased likelihood. While tenured faculty members indicated lower frequencies of active learning in Milem’s (2001) study, differences in rank were not significant in Nelson Laird’s (2011) findings.

![Graph](image)

*Figure 3. Changes in Faculty Teaching Practices from 1989-2014, By Percent Marking “All” or “Most” Courses (Eagan et al., 2014)*

Adaptations to course framework to meet student needs are also represented in the literature on commitments to diversity. As with the reports on active learning, a comparison between Maruyama and Moreno (2000) and Nelson Laird’s (2011) findings indicates growth in the frequency of course adjustments. Maruyama and Moreno (2000) found that as a result of the presence of diverse students in the classroom, 29% of faculty members adjusted the course syllabus to include racial/ethnic issues and 18% re-examined criteria for evaluating students. The
presence of diverse students on campus yielded lower commitments to adjusting the course syllabus (21%) and reevaluating criteria for student evaluation (11%). These changes suggest classroom diversity has a slightly higher influence on course adaptation than campus diversity. Nelson Laird (2011) reported that 74% of faculty members frequently tried to learn about student characteristics to improve class instruction, and 74% of faculty members also consistently adjusted aspects of the course to meet student needs. Seventy-six percent of faculty members actively engaged with multiple learning techniques to evaluate student learning (Nelson Laird, 2011). The increased commitment by faculty members to learner needs between the studies of Maruyama and Moreno (2000) and Nelson Laird (2011) indicates strong support for developing learner-centered practices. However, while shifts in active learning occurred between 2000 and 2011, the recent findings of Nelson Laird et al. (2018) indicate that between 2011 and 2017, “dramatic improvements in diversity inclusivity have not likely been made in the last decade (p. 14).

**Curriculum**

Curriculum is a key element linking personal perception and pedagogy. Chesler et al., (2005) posit, “Trying to create multicultural curricular materials may lead some faculty to enter areas in which they doubt their competence” (pp. 135-136). Curriculum is addressed in faculty studies by examining predictors of faculty members’ commitments to diversity and the representation of diverse content in disciplines of study. Milem (2001) and Hurtado’s (2002) studies provided initial insights on predictors of curricular diversity. Female faculty members, as well as African American, Native American, and Latino faculty members, were more likely to
incorporate readings on race, ethnicity, and gender (Milem, 2001; Hurtado, 2002).

While smaller in sample scale, Mayhew and Grunwald’s (2006) study of 336 faculty members from one Midwestern public university reported diversity content specific to gender, race, discipline, personal attitude, departmental and institutional commitments, and participation in diversity-related activities. The majority of respondents in the sample identified as White (86%) and were tenured (67%). Overall, 69% of faculty members incorporated diversity-related materials into their courses. While race and gender were predictors of commitments to diversity, the intersection of both categories of identity was statistically significant. Male and female minority faculty members were more likely than White faculty members to incorporate diversity-related content.

Mayhew and Grunwald (2006) found that faculty members in the arts and sciences, fine arts, business and administration, and engineering were more likely to incorporate diversity content. The perception of departmental support was more influential than institutional support. Within a department, the value of diversity, course integration of racial and gender issues, support from the chair, and the need for more diverse faculty increased the incorporation of diversity content. Out of the 13 variables tested in the study, faculty members’ participation in organized activities that promoted diversity awareness such as conferences and workshops was the most significant predictor of diversity in course content.

Widening the scope to an examination of national statistics, Nelson Laird (2011) found that 40% of faculty respondents on the FSSE agreed with high frequency that their course content emphasized contributions to the field by people from diverse cultures, while 31% reported “some” commitment and 30% indicate very little
exposure. The 2013-2014 HERI Faculty Survey indicated that faculty members in the social sciences reported the highest percentage of satisfaction with diversity content in the curriculum of their field, and faculty members in STEM fields had the lowest satisfaction (Eagan et al., 2014). The survey findings also suggested that faculty members in the arts felt the least satisfied with the representation of women and minorities in courses, while those in professional fields reported the highest levels of satisfaction.

The disciplinary and departmental differences that emerge in studies on pedagogy (Milem, 2001; Nelson Laird 2011) and curriculum (Mayhew and Grunwald, 2006; Eagan et al., 2014) suggest there are unique cultural identities at work in the structural dimensions of higher education. An examination of institutional and departmental commitments to diversity offers a perspective on how faculty members perceive administrative and policy-based influences.

**Structural Commitments**

Addressing the operationalization of diversity, Maruyama and Moreno’s (2000) found that while the majority of faculty members agreed their institutions and departments were committed to enhancing the climate on campus for all students, there was a lower perception of diversity as high priority within departments than there was reported within institutions. More than half of the faculty members believed that their institutions were supportive of both student and faculty diversity. While White faculty members viewed institutional and departmental values about diversity more positively, non-White faculty members indicated seeing more benefits of diversity in the student body, in classrooms, and in teaching and research. Male
faculty members also viewed institutional and departmental values about diversity more positively; yet, female faculty members viewed diversity in the student body, in classrooms, and in teaching and research more positively. Maruyama and Moreno’s (2000) findings suggest that race and gender have an impact on the perception of diversity as an organizational goal and as an operationalized value.

The 2013-2014 HERI Faculty Survey reported findings on decision-making values and on the perception of structural diversity (Eagan et al., 2014). More than half of faculty members agreed between “somewhat” and “very” that administrators consider their concerns when creating policies and the administration is transparent about those policies. Faculty from private universities reported lower frequencies of agreement to both statements than those in public universities and colleges. Well over half of the faculty members also agreed “somewhat” or “very” with the statement that faculty are typically at odds with campus administration. The majority of male and White faculty members rated their institutions as having effective hiring policies to increase racial and gender diversity. Asian faculty members were 66% in agreement with that statement, followed by Latino (49%) and African American (43%) faculty members. The representation of structural commitments indicated in the findings of Maruyama and Moreno (2000) and Eagan et al. (2014) highlights the complexity of internal and external influences shaping organizational perception.

Empowering Diversity Commitments

The personal, pedagogical, curricular, and structural elements of commitments to diversity provide a complex view of factors influencing faculty identity and decision-making (Chesler et al., 2005). In each of the four dimensions, the
juxtaposition between the autonomy of faculty members as individuals and their collective accountability in the larger organizational structure of the university emerges (Birnbaum, 1988). Altbach (1998) suggests this contrast will endure. As the distribution of financial resources becomes increasingly aligned with measures of teaching and research outcomes, structures of decision-making will shift to adapt to external demands of globalization and student needs (Altbach, 1998; Chun & Evans, 2009). In this climate of change, diversity has the potential to alter how faculty members are positioned in decision-making hierarchy (Smith, 2009). Chun and Evans (2009) highlight the opportunity to expand the definition of resources by positioning faculty and staff as the “intellectual and creative capital, the talent that drives the engine” of institutions forward (p. 16). Re-framing talent as ‘capital’ places an emphasis on creating structural organizations that support investment and growth in employees.

Understanding factors that inhibit and empower faculty members to include diversity in their teaching, research, and service is necessary in order to create organizational structures that support diversity. Tierney’s (1989) definition of empowerment suggests that an essential element in organizational transformation is equitable participation:

To speak of empowerment means more than enabling the powerless to assume powerful positions in the organization….We need to develop empowering strategies that go beyond struggles for individual achievement. We must develop strategies of empowerment whereby organizational participants are able to think and act critically. (p. 30)
Structural diversity alone is not enough to reverse the legacy of exclusion in higher education (Bowen & Bok, 1998; Chun & Evans, 2009; Gurin et al., 2002). The foundation of Tierney’s (1989) process of transformation is democratic participation in decision-making (Chun & Evans, 2009).

Systems of interdependence that value the identities, voices, and resources of individuals stand in contrast to systems that perpetuate oppression by restricting opportunities (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997; Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1994, 1996). Prilleltensky and Gonick (1996) argue that oppression “curtails self-determination, perpetuates social injustice, and suppresses the voice of vulnerable individuals” (p. 131). Oppression is described as both a process and a dynamic state of being that instills negative views of self (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). As a process, it is transmitted through constructs of power between individuals and entities, and as a dynamic state of being it manifests through internal and external influences. Hardiman and Jackson’s (1997) social identity development model describes how oppression takes hold in social structures. It begins with those in power defining reality and setting standards for behavior. Inequity then becomes status quo through the institutionalization of discrimination. The third layer, titled “psychological colonization,” takes form as the oppressed group internalizes negative views and resists the oppressor’s social structure. The fourth step in the process of oppression occurs when the target group’s identity is dismissed and the culture of the dominant group is enacted (Hardiman & Jackson, 1997). Through these four elements, oppression moves between the individual, institutional, and societal spheres to completely encompass identity (Evans & Chun, 2007).
Oppression inhabits two forms: a political, external view that impacts organizational structure and a psychological, internal view that impacts behavior (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996; Evans & Chun, 2007). Both political and psychological dynamics of oppression are reflected in the personal, pedagogical, curricular, and structural dimensions of faculty commitments to diversity (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996; Chesler et al., 2005). The external view of oppression manifests in organizational barriers to diversity that restrict participation (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). The findings on hiring practices and the perception of equity in work in the 2013-2014 HERI Faculty Survey reflect differences in faculty members’ characteristics and organizational support. Male and White faculty members agreed that their institutions have effective hiring policies to increase racial and gender diversity, and female and African American faculty members reported that they felt they worked harder to be perceived as legitimate scholars (Eagan et al., 2014).

Psychological barriers of oppression result in negative views of self (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996), and this dimension relates to the personal barriers expressed by Weinstein and Obear (1992). The fear of losing self-identity, marginalizing students, and losing control of the classroom represent an intrapersonal and interpersonal fear about the shaping of identity and behavior (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996; Weinstein & Obear, 1992). An indication of this is found in the percentage (54%) of faculty members that regularly addressed their potential biases about course-related issues (Nelson Laird et al.). A qualitative expression of this fear is reflected in the feedback from a White, female instructor of African American literature:
Do I have a right to talk about this? If I open up some time of dialogue am I going to be strong enough to control it, am I going to have enough empathy to handle the situation, you know compassion where necessary...I want to make sure a student doesn’t feel shut down for the rest of the semester because of something that happened. Or something happens how can I make you feel comfortable again? How can I make each student feel safe to give his or her opinion? (Considine et al., 2014, p. 24).

Questions of personal and professional identity are raised as the instructor commits to the process of incorporating diverse perspectives in the classroom (Considine et al., 2014; Weinstein & Obear, 1992). The psychological fear of alienation is a powerful challenge in enacting commitments to diversity (Evans & Chun, 2007).

While oppression moves from external forces to internal landscapes of identity, individuals in organizations that empower decision-making undergo transformation that develops from within. At the foundation of this process are institutional structures that celebrate and promote self-determination. In the ability to define identity, self-determination provides confidence in personal skills and knowledge (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003; Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). This confidence stands in contrast to the fear analyzed by Weinstein and Obear (1992) in incorporating diversity in the classroom. Self-determination facilitates action, and in this action a movement from the internal to the external occurs (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003). Self-confidence, respect for others, and skills to engage in active listening are necessary to facilitate reciprocal interactions and move from the personal to the public space of society to direct social change (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003).
The model of reciprocal empowerment developed by Chun & Evans (2009) offers a framework for institutions to structurally commit to diversity by investing in faculty. The model emphasizes that systemic change in higher education results from “sustained organizational attention to deeply embedded, socially derived barriers to diversity” (Chun & Evans, 2009, p. 24). Reciprocal empowerment builds on the attention to diversity established through compositional structure and mission statements and internalizes it as a philosophy of influence on the policies, culture, and practices of colleges and universities. The core of the model—self-determination, distributive justice, and collaborative and democratic participation—establishes the foundation for diversity to become the value which attracts and supports innovative faculty members who in turn provide students with the skills needed to achieve success in a globalized market.

**Assessment of Diversity**

Several quantitative instruments are currently implemented to measure faculty diversity: the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey, the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), Cultural Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Faculty Survey, and the HEDS Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey. While these surveys include measures of diversity in relation to climate, pedagogy, and curriculum, a detailed understanding of the nature of diversity experiences and the factors of influence on those commitments are not thoroughly explored. Exploring the experiences of faculty members through a qualitative approach provides the opportunity to hear faculty members’ voices and explore the nature of diversity in the college composition classroom (Creswell & Poth, 2018).
Summary

This chapter provided context on the legal history of diversity in higher education and the structures of power that influence faculty-decision making. Chesler et al.’s (2005) model of forces of influences was utilized for considering the personal, pedagogical, curricular, and structural dimensions of faculty commitments to curricular diversity. Findings on faculty characteristics, degrees of commitment and practice, and institutional and departmental support were indicated. The operationalization of both oppression and empowerment were examined through model of reciprocal empowerment (Evans & Chun, 2009). The benefit of examining faculty diversity experiences through a qualitative assessment of faculty members’ voices was presented. Chapter Three will explore the methodology and methods that guided this study.
Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology that was used to explore diversity as experienced by English composition faculty members. Qualitative research uses “interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 42). This qualitative study used Chesler et al.’s (2005) model of forces influencing faculty approaches to diversity as a conceptual framework to support a multidimensional view of faculty decision-making. The theory of reciprocal empowerment highlights the value in developing a perspective of the organizational structures in higher education institutions that support diversity (Chun & Evans, 2009; Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003; Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996). The discussion in this chapter outlines the research questions, rationale, participants, role of the researcher, data gathering, data explication, validation of criteria, and ethical considerations.

Research Questions

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to explore the diversity experiences of English composition faculty members who teach in colleges in the Pacific Northwest. The following research questions guided this study:

1. How are English composition faculty members experiencing diversity?
2. How are English composition faculty members describing the factors influencing their commitments to diversity?
Rationale for Methodology

This study employed qualitative research to gain an understanding of experiences through the sharing of voices and stories (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While multiple approaches in qualitative inquiry are grounded in storytelling, phenomenology provides the opportunity to understand “the world as we ordinarily experience it or become conscious of it—before we think, conceptualize, abstract, or theorize it” (van Manen, 2016a, p. 65). Phenomenology is defined as the study and expression of phenomena (van Manen, 2016a, 2016b). The phenomenon to be studied through this research will be English composition faculty members’ experiences with diversity. This research intends to describe the essence of diversity in the college composition classroom (Creswell & Poth, 2018; van Manen, 2016a, 2016b).

As a human science, phenomenology is rooted in “the ways human beings experience and are conscious of the world” (van Manen, 2016a, p. 58). To understand these lived experiences, phenomenology is devoted to the prereflective ‘ordinariness’ of every day life and the subsequent awareness that results from reflection through phenomenological inquiry (van Manen, 2016a). Two states—the prereflective and reflective—serve as the foundation of phenomenological study (van Manen, 2016a). The preflective, lived experienced is embodied through the statement zu den Sachen “to the things themselves” (van Manen, 2016a, 2016b). The prereflective experience is a retention of primal impressions—the seeing, hearing, and feeling—of events as they occurred before reflection (Husserl & Churchill, 1964; van Manen, 2016a). Lived experience as “the ultimate bearer of meaning” is accessed through this sensory storytelling (van Manen, 2016a, p. 65). By revealing the primal impression, the
ordinary and ‘taken-for-granted’ experiences are brought into reflective awareness through the interview process (van Manen, 2016a).

Phenomenology elevates the “taken-for-grantedness” of every day moments and illustrates how language contributes to the assignment of meaning by showing attention to “how our words, concepts, and theories inevitably shape and give structure to our experiences as we live them” (van Manen, 2016a, p. 58). Phenomenological inquiry embraces the elements of wonder and thoughtfulness to express phenomena (van Manen, 2016a, 2016b). Wonder inspires the phenomenological researcher to ask, “‘What is the nature, meaning, significance, uniqueness, or singularity of this or that experience as we live through it or as it is given in our experience of consciousness?’” (van Manen, 2016a, p. 39). It is through thoughtfulness the phenomenological researcher attunes to “the rich realities of human existence” (van Manen, 2016a, p. 68).

The two main approaches to phenomenology—descriptive and interpretive—shape the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the meaning of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sloan & Bowe, 2014). Developed by Husserl, transcendental or psychological phenomenology is descriptive in nature based on the researcher’s role in “transcend[ing] the phenomena and meanings being investigated to take a global view of the essences discovered” (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 6). In contrast, hermeneutic phenomenology recommends the researcher “interpret the meanings found in relation to phenomena” (Sloan & Bowe, 2014, p. 9). The interpretive approach developed by Heidegger highlights the researcher’s role in the identification of phenomenon (Sloan & Bowe, 2014). While both transcendental
and hermeneutic phenomenological inquiries are based in the exploration of the lived experience, the variation in methodological approaches influences study design and data analysis (Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

The conceptual framework of this study highlights the benefits of utilizing the hermeneutic approach to phenomenology. In Cheslter et al.’s (2005) model of forces influencing faculty approaches to diversity and the theory of reciprocal empowerment (Chun & Evans, 2009; Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003; Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1996), individual faculty member’s act as single entities influenced by larger institutional structures. Van Manen (2016b) describes hermeneutic phenomenology as “a philosophy of the personal, the individual, which we pursue against the background of an understanding of the evasive character of the logos of other, the whole, the communal, or the social” (p. 7). Through hermeneutic phenomenology an interpretive understanding of the individual at work within a system has the potential to be developed.

The hermeneutic approach to phenomenology is defined by “a dynamic interplay among six research activities” (van Manen, 2016b, pp. 30-31). Figure 4 illustrates the movement between the research activities of interest, investigation, reflection, description, orientation, and balance. Van Manen (2016a) notes that while phenomenology has both descriptive and interpretive elements, hermeneutic phenomenology is a reflection on lived experiences through “discursive language and sensitive interpretive devices that make phenomenological analysis, explication, and description possible and intelligible” (p. 26). The language of analysis and interpretive
devices to be used in the methods of this study are described in the discussions on data gathering and explication.

Figure 4. Six Research Activities in Hermeneutic Phenomenology (van Manen, 2016b)

Participants

To explore the experience of diversity for English composition faculty members, participants were drawn from diverse educational backgrounds, academic interests, and employment statuses through the strategy of purposeful sampling. The ambiguity and variability across the literature on the definition of purposeful sampling invites a discussion of the term employed in this study (Gentles, Charles, Ploeg, &
McKibbon, 2015). The concept of purposeful sampling in this research is informed by Yin’s (2011) definition as “the selection of participants … based on their anticipated richness and relevance of information in relation to the study’s research questions” (p. 311). This description echoes van Manen’s (2016a) assertion that the goal of sampling in phenomenology should be “to gather enough experientially rich accounts that make possible the figuration of powerful experiential examples or anecdotes that help make contact with life as it is lived” (p. 353). Van Manen (2016a) advocates for the use of the term ‘examples’ rather than ‘sample’ or ‘sampling’ to highlight the emphasis on gathering rich descriptions.

In this study faculty members’ experiences with diversity were gained through the approach of maximum variation in examples. This approach strengthens the opportunity to discover differences between experiential accounts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Faculty members that had commitments to diversity and were teaching composition during the 2018-2019 academic year in two and four-year colleges were selected for participation. Faculty members were identified through publicly available department websites and LinkedIn. Twelve full and part-time faculty members from across nine colleges and universities in the Pacific Northwest were invited to voluntarily participate in the study through email recruitment (see Appendix A). These faculty members approached diversity through a wide variety of lens that included race, gender, sexuality, socio-economics, disability, and citizenship status. Three faculty members responded to the recruitment and were chosen to participate in this study. Two of the participants indicated commitments to diversity through their
faculty biographies and research publications, and one participant indicated commitments to diversity through his teaching philosophy.

Sample size is a consideration in purposeful sampling, and Creswell and Poth (2018) note samples from one (Padilla, 2013) to 325 participants (Polkinghorne, 1989) are present in the literature on phenomenological studies. However, van Manen (2016a) cautions against taking a formulized approach based on size and composition in phenomenological study. With the intent of building rich descriptions, “it does not make much sense to ask how large the sample of interviewees, participants, or subjects should be, or how a sample should be composed and proportioned” (van Manen, 2016a, p. 353). Rather than establish a definitive size of examples in the design of this study, the goal is to gather the amount of experiential accounts necessary to discover the essence of diversity for college composition faculty and to build “a scholarly and reflective phenomenological text” (van Manen, 2016a, p. 353).

**Positionality**

The experience, training, and perspective of the researcher are key components to consider in qualitative study (Patton, 1999). I have over ten years experience teaching composition courses, and I have also taught courses in literature, speech, and college success skills. Currently, I am a part-time instructor of composition at a public four-year institution, and over the past decade I have also taught at community college and for-profit institutions. My teaching load varies term by term, and I have never been employed in a full-time academic position. I hold a B.A. in English and an M.A. in Literature, and my early academic background was in the study of medieval and early modern literature. More recently, I have been engaged in the study of education
with an emphasis in organizational leadership and culturally responsive evaluation. My professional career has been focused on the teaching of writing across all levels from pre-college English to advanced research. When asked the question, “Why do you teach writing?” my answer is this: I believe that writing empowers through the ability to be heard, understood, and build community. I acknowledge that while I was excited by and thrived in composition courses in as a student, for others the writing classroom can be characterized by uncertainty and fear. Working with students with diverse identities, backgrounds, and life experiences continues to be the factor that most profoundly impacts my teaching philosophy.

It is my goal as instructor to create an environment where every student can succeed through a classroom “that is life-sustaining and mind-expanding, a place of liberating mutuality where teacher and student together work in partnership” (hooks, 2003, p. xv). To create this space, I design curriculum around the principles of access through the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. I continue to work to decolonize my classroom through collaborative learning, the representation of diverse voices in texts and assignments, and on-going dialogues about the power structures present in the higher education. My professional development has focused on strategies for strengthening persistence for first generation, at-risk, and marginalized students. As a feminist and post-colonial scholar, I am guided by the call from Wilson (2005) to raise my own critical consciousness about oppression and history in order to cultivate change and the “positive rebuilding energy needed in our communities” (p. 14).
Turning to the nature of a lived experience of interest is the first activity in phenomenological research (van Manen, 2016b). Van Manen (2016b) notes, “It is not until I have identified my interest in the nature of a selected human experience that a true phenomenological questioning is possible” (p. 42). As an instructor and researcher, I am attentive to how diversity takes shape in the college classroom. I am driven by a curiosity for how faculty members interpret, invest in, and enact practices that promote the incorporation of diversity, and I am particularly interested in learning how to support faculty in furthering those commitments. The desire to explore the nature of diversity experiences formed the foundation of this phenomenological study.

Phenomenological inquiry is initiated by a deep wonder that both “dislocates and displaces” by asking researchers to be open to experiences as they are given and shown (Merleau-Ponty & Ladnes, 2014; van Manen, 2016a, p. 37). This openness is necessary to elevate the ordinary and examine the limits of time and language in order express lived experience (van Manen, 2016a). Through the phenomenological perspective research is presented as a both a cognitive and caring act (van Manen, 2016b). In the process of wonder, questioning, and “attaching ourselves to the world,” the phenomenological researcher develops the intentionality to “bring the world as a world into being for us and in us” (van Manen, 2016b, p. 5). Research as an act that relates to our knowing and being highlights the importance of developing an understanding of the relationship between the researcher and the lived experience examples. The nature of that relationship in this study will be further explored in the discussion on gathering experiential accounts.
Data Gathering

The data gathered in this study were descriptions of faculty members’ experiences with diversity while teaching college composition. These experiential examples were collected through in-person and online interviews between the researcher and participants. A semi-structured interview (SSI) framework was utilized to gather participants’ lived experiences. SSI provided the opportunity for accessing those experiential accounts through pre-determined interview questions, open-ended responses, and follow-up prompts (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The balance between the structure of the questions and the flexibility of the response format formed the foundation of the semi-structured interview (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). Within the SSI framework four typologies exist: descriptive/confirmative, descriptive/corrective, descriptive/interpretive, and descriptive/ divergent (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). This study utilized the descriptive/interpretive type SSI for the goal of discovering experiential examples (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). This framework highlighted the participant’s knowledge in gaining insight into the nature of the phenomenon (McIntosh & Morse, 2015).

The structured element of SSI necessitates an established interview schedule to document the domain of the study, topic categories, and question items (McIntosh & Morse, 2015). The domain of inquiry in this study was faculty experiences with diversity. Within this domain three categories were established: (a) the definition of diversity, (b) the experience of support, (c) the experience of barriers. These categories were developed through a literature review on the approach to diversity in higher education research (Terenzini et al., 2001), the commitments to classroom diversity by
faculty (Eagan et al., 2014; Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2017; Nelson Laird, 2011; Nelson Laird et al., 2018), and the barriers experienced by faculty in enacting those commitments (Austin & Wulff, 2004; Bell et al., 1997; Considine et al., 2014; Weinstein & Obear, 1992). The three conceptual categories were utilized to construct six question stems and prompts (see Table 2). The language of the stems was constructed with the aim of inspiring personal stories and concrete examples of lived experiences (van Manen, 2016a, 2016b).

The chart of categories and items outlined in Table 2 was utilized as a resource to maintain the phenomenological intent of the interview (McIntosh & Morse, 2015; van Manen, 2016b). The order of the items was scheduled to build rapport between the researcher and participants (Leech, 2002; Spradley, 1979). To begin the interview, the informed consent document (Appendix B) was given to participants to sign. The first item of the interview—“Can you share with me how you prep for your English 101 courses?”—was a grand tour question designed to invoke familiarity and initiate the storytelling experience (Leech, 2002; Spradley, 1979). The movement in the items between positive and challenging experiences with diversity was designed to cultivate a safe space for exploration (Leech, 2002). At the end of the interviews, demographic information on gender, race, time teaching, employment position, and institutional type was gathered. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to an hour long, and they were recorded with two audio devices to ensure for reliability. Professional transcriptionists transcribed the audio files, and the researcher verified the accuracy of the transcriptions. The audio and transcription files were stored on a password-protected computer, and the master list of participant names and
Table 2

*Category and Item Construction for the Domain of Faculty Experiences with Diversity*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Item Number</th>
<th>Scheduled Question</th>
<th>Prompt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Diversity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Can you share with me how you prep for your English 101 courses?</td>
<td>Tell me your process for putting together your course readings and assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>How do you define diversity?</td>
<td>Anecdote of factors such as race or political affiliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of Support</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Can you tell me about a time you had a positive experience with diversity in the classroom?</td>
<td>Anecdote of factors such as working with a student, in-class activities, or assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Can you describe what encourages your commitments to diversity?</td>
<td>How does it feel to be supported?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of Barriers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Can you tell me about a time that you had a challenging experience with diversity in the classroom?</td>
<td>What did that decision feel like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Can you describe what challenges your commitments to diversity?</td>
<td>How does it feel to experience those challenges?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
contact information was stored in a password-protected file separate from the transcriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Members were sent copies of the interview transcriptions to check for accuracy and to indicate the desire for omissions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). None of the participants requested that the transcriptions be altered.

Essential to the gathering of lived experiences is the phenomenological method of reduction (van Manen, 2016a, 2016b). While the root of the term implies a lessening or subtraction, it is through the reduction that an attention to the taken-for-grantedness of the ordinary is made possible (van Manen, 2016b). In the reduction, “We return to self; we experience things that exist in the world from the vantage point of self-awareness, self-reflection, and self-knowledge…. Something essential is revealed” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95). The reduction is comprised of two components: the epoché and the reduction-proper (van Manen, 2016a). The reduction-proper is the reflection of the lived experience, and to achieve this reflective consciousness an awareness of presuppositions is necessary. The epoché, also known as bracketing, is the acknowledgement of barriers that prevent making contact with the primal impressions of lived experience (van Manen, 2016a). These barriers can take the form of assumptions, theories, and linguistic frameworks that influence meaning through preconceived knowledge (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2016a). While methodological approaches to the epoché vary across phenomenological lineages, the ability to maintain openness to lived experiences is central to phenomenological reduction (LeVasseur, 2003; van Manen, 2016a).
The hermeneutic framework of this study utilized the epoché as a method to bring awareness to the researcher’s presuppositions (van Manen, 2016a). Through this approach the researcher examined and questioned assumptions about the lived experience (van Manen, 2016a, 2016b). Moustakas (1994) describes this as a “reflective-meditation” in which the researcher consciously observes the presuppositions (p. 89). Conscious attention through the epoché took two forms in this study: a research journal and interview bracketing. Assumptions, experiences, and theories of the researcher were recorded at the start of the study in the research journal. The researcher labeled, described, and explored these presuppositions until “an internal readiness to enter freshly… and receive whatever is offered” was achieved (Moustakas, 1994, p. 89).

During the interview process bracketing was used to identify the researcher’s assumptions and reactions. Each of the brackets were reflected on and explored in the research journal before, during, and after the process of thematic analysis. Through this process the bracket list was reviewed “until its hold on my consciousness [was] released” and the nature of the phenomenon was perceived rather than assumed (Moustakas, 1994, p. 89). The researcher did have a professional relationship with one of the participants in the study, and their collegial connection surfaced during the interview. The participant acknowledged being comfortable because “I know you,” and the researcher bracketed this phrase in her field notes and explored the implications of the statement in her research journal. The findings from the research journal were shared and discussed throughout the progress of the study with a qualitative researcher in the field of education. This peer debriefing provided an
external perspective of the epoché and served to support and challenge the researcher’s methodology and methods (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Data Explication**

The explication of lived experiences is influenced by the openness of the epoché and the form of reflection adopted in the reduction-proper (van Manen, 2016b). Defined as the “reflective phenomenological attitude,” the reduction-proper is the method that guides the sense of meaning in the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016b, p. 228). This study utilized the ontological reduction-proper in hermeneutic phenomenology to embrace Heidegger’s philosophy of the ways of being (van Manen, 2016b). Through ontological meaning “everyway of being in the world is a way of understanding the world as an event of being” (van Manen, 2016b, p. 231). The ontological focus acknowledges the experience of faculty committing to diversity as a mode of being (van Manen, 2016b). Through the ontological reduction-proper the positionality of lived experience is investigated (van Manen, 2016b). Heidegger expresses positionality through the engagement of the world ‘ready-to-hand’ and ‘present-at-hand’ (Heidegger, 2010; van Manen, 2016b). While ready-to-hand focuses on the physical use of objects, present-at-hand is concerned with the reflection on and thinking about objects (Heidegger, 2010; van Manen, 2016b). The movement between readiness and presence contributes to an understanding of being and meaning (Heidegger, 2010; van Manen, 2016b)

The nature of phenomenon is explored in the process of uncovering thematic aspects of lived experiences (van Manen, 2016b). Thematic statements are utilized as
a starting point to develop rich descriptions of experiential examples (van Manen, 2016a). The three-layered approach to seeing developed by van Manen (2016a, 2016b) was used to uncover essential themes in this study. In the first level of approach, the text is explored broadly in answer to the question, “What sententious phrase may capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole?” (van Manen, 2016a, p. 93). A ‘wholistic’ sense of meaning is captured by a phrase formulated by the researcher (van Manen, 2016a, 2016b). The sentence, “Melissa explores the connection between equity, technology, and course content in the community college classroom,” was developed based on the connection between diversity and open educational resources in one participant’s interview. The sententious phrases developed for each interview were used to begin each participant’s narrative in chapter four. In observance of the text by paragraph, statements or phrases “essential or revealing about the phenomenon” were recorded (van Manen, 2016a, p. 93). The detailed reading of individual lines embraces the question, “What does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described?” (van Manen, 2016a, p. 93). Table 3 provides a visual representation of the three approaches, investigative questions, and method of researcher response.

Validation Criteria

The golden rule of phenomenological study is to “never generalize” (van Manen, 2016b, p. 352). By nature “phenomenology is a form of inquiry that does not yield generalizations in the usual empirical sense” (van Manen, 2016a, p. 352). Phenomenology does not seek to build a relationship between experiential examples and a population (van Manen, 2016a). Rather, a balance between the unique nature of
Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wholistic</td>
<td>What sententious phrase may capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole?</td>
<td>Formulation of a sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective</td>
<td>What statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described?</td>
<td>Captured phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed</td>
<td>What does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described?</td>
<td>Captured phrases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(van Manen, 2016a, 2016b)

Lived experience and the universal essence of the phenomenon is acknowledged (van Manen, 2016a). Validity is established in phenomenological inquiry through “the appraisal of the originality of insights and the soundness of interpretive processes demonstrated in the study” (van Manen, 2016a, p. 348). Van Manen (2016a, 2016b) argues that the criteria traditionally utilized to measure eternal validity in qualitative research is not applicable to phenomenology’s aim of developing rich descriptions of meaning. Alternatively, four questions are used to test validity (van Manen, 2016a, pp. 350-51):

1. Is the study based on a valid phenomenological question? In other words, does the study ask, “What is the human experience like?” “How is this or that phenomenon or event experienced?” A phenomenological question should not be confused with empirical studies of a particular population, person(s), or
group of people at a particular time and location. Also, phenomenology cannot deal with causal questions or theoretical explanations. However, a particular individual or group may be studied for the understanding of a phenomenological theme—such as a gender phenomenon, a social-political event, or the experience of a human disaster.

2. Is analysis performed on experientially descriptive accounts, transcripts? (Does the analysis avoid empirical material that mostly consists of perceptions, opinions, beliefs, views, and so on?)

3. Is the study properly rooted in primary and scholarly phenomenological literature—rather than mostly relying on questionable secondary and tertiary sources?

4. Does the study avoid trying to legitimate itself with validation criteria derived form sources that are concerned with other (non-phenomenological) methodologies?

These criteria are utilized to evaluate the phenomenological text as a whole. Validity in specific relation to methodology and methods can be addressed through the fifth research activity of “maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon” (van Manen, 2016b, p. 31). The descriptive-interpretive framework of hermeneutic phenomenology was carried throughout the study through the SSI type, the reduction approach, and thematic analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The Institutional Review Board at the University of Portland provided permission to conduct this study on February 21, 2019. The ethical considerations at
the foundation of this research were based on the three principles outlined in the Belmont Report: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (National Commission, 1978). Respect for persons necessitates that participants voluntarily enter research and are adequately informed. This study adhered to that principle by inviting faculty members to volunteer to participate and by stating the purpose, risks, benefits, and confidentiality through a document of informed consent (Appendix B). The principle of beneficence ensures that harm does not come to participants during or as a result of research. Individual identities were protected in the study by the removal of personal and institutional names. Justice encompasses the fairness of distribution between the benefits and burdens of research. While faculty members experienced the burden of time by participating in the study, they also stand to benefit from the sharing of its conclusions. The results of this study have provided greater understanding of the experience of diversity in the college composition classroom.

**Summary**

Phenomenological inquiry was utilized to explore diversity as experienced by English composition faculty members. The approach of hermeneutic phenomenology provided the philosophical and methodological foundation for this study. This chapter outlines the methodology, methods, and procedures for gathering, explicating, and validating data. Essential to the study of phenomenology are the rich textual descriptions of lived experience (van Manen, 2016a, 2016b). These experiential accounts will be explored in Chapter Four and the implications of the findings will be presented in Chapter Five.
Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to explore the diversity experiences of English composition faculty members who teach in colleges in the Pacific Northwest. The findings of this study were based on interview responses from three participants. The following research questions guided this investigation:

1. How are English composition faculty members experiencing diversity?
2. How are English composition faculty members describing the factors influencing their commitments to diversity?

This chapter will present findings from three semi-structured interviews through storytelling, participant voices, and an analysis of the shared experiences between participants. The aim of phenomenological writing is “to construct a possible interpretation of the nature of certain human experience” (van Manen, 2016b, p. 41).

The goal of interpretation is to develop an understanding through language of the essence of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016a, 2016b). Phenomenological inquiry contains three essential dimensions: the epoché, the reduction-proper, and the vocative (van Manen, 2016a). While epoché is the bracketing of the researcher’s assumptions, the reduction-proper is the wonder and openness to ways of being (van Manen, 2016a, 2016b). The third element of phenomenological method is the calling forward of voices through the writing and rewriting of a vocative text (van Manen, 2016a, 2016b). Van Manen (2016a) explains that through phenomenological writing “we must engage language…which hearkens back to the silence from which words emanate…. So that in words, or, perhaps better, in spite of the words, we find memories that paradoxically we never thought or felt before” (p. 241). The memories
in this study take the form of participants’ experiences and stories about diversity in the college composition classroom.

**Participant Characteristics**

Melissa has been teaching for over 13 years, and for the last nine years she has been instructing in the community college setting. She recently accepted a full-time position, and before this term she was teaching as an adjunct between two community colleges. She identifies as a White female. She currently teaches pre-100 level writing courses that focus on developing the skills students will need to successfully navigate academic composition. Throughout her career she has taught all levels of writing, and now she primarily teaches online. She describes that teaching both developmental writing and college composition provides her with insight into understanding the nature of the transition between the two courses for students. One of her main areas of focus is the development of open educational resources (OERs) to empower student learning and faculty development. She has an M.F.A. in Creative Writing and an M.S. in Education, and she is currently in a doctoral program in educational technology.

James instructs and directs the writing program at a four-year institution. He teaches basic writing courses and senior writing seminars. He designs the framework for freshman composition and supervises teaching assistants as they teach the class as part of their graduate teaching practicum. James identifies as a White male and has been instructing for over nine years. He has a PhD in English and is currently full-time. His position brought him from the East to the West Coast, and while on the East Coast during his doctoral program he taught composition at a community college as an adjunct. Basic writing and disability studies are his two focus areas, and currently he is
working to develop a disability studies program as a result of students expressing their interest in having a disability studies minor.

Luke teaches composition at a four-year institution and writing in the transitional studies department at a two-year college. He is currently part-time at both institutions, and he has an M.A. in Writing. In the transitional studies department he teaches a variety of courses from pre-100 level writing to GED preparation, and he often teaches writing courses that are integrated with other subjects such as U.S. History. His course load and the courses he teaches vary term by term, and being flexible to take a wide-variety of courses has been important throughout his career. He identifies as a White male and has been teaching for over 20 years, and during that time he has held both full-time and adjunct positions.

**Participant Lived Experiences**

**Melissa**

Melissa explores the connection between equity, technology, and course content in the community college classroom. This past year she set the goal of making a reading list comprised of women authors in a composition course focused on social media, privacy, and technology. As she was investigating new writers to include she realized that it was not going to be possible to develop a reading list entirely of women. While she was able to find mainstream news articles, once she began to look for sources in the early history of information technology she encountered literature dominated by White, male writers. She described, “You can find critiques of it by women, but to get to the foundational document you have to go back and read somebody who is not who I was looking for.” Although she was unable to develop a
list of exclusively women, she explained that the investigation of authors was a successful intellectual challenge. Trying this “broaden[ed] where I'm looking and how I'm looking…that extra parameter made me go further.” Melissa did not tell her students that their reading list was centered on women writers, and she never asked if they noticed. This exploration brought her back to an investigation of reference lists and extended into an internal questioning of why she has returned to the same male authors when building course content.

For Melissa, the impact of course readings on students inspired a recollection of empowering and challenging experiences as well as a reflection on differences between institutional settings. She uses a reading in her classroom that explores societal assumptions about blue-collar work, and in describing the influence of the text on students she talked about what it was like to use the piece in a four-year versus community college setting. In her classes at the four-year college where she taught at the start of her career she noted that the piece inspired student growth. She described that for many of the students “seeing things from the view point of the lower socioeconomic worker or class was a really new experience for them.” This stands in contrast to the students in her community college classroom who have experiences themselves or in their families with blue-collar jobs. She recalled that one student who after reading the piece was inspired to write her very first essay about the skills and intellect her work as a hairdresser required. Melissa noted the student “felt like there was a place for her voice in college because she had seen this printed college text that talked about people like her.” While that particular reading has had a positive impact
on students, she has also had experiences with course content that had the potential to alienate students.

Recently, Melissa utilized a documentary that examined the journeys of high school seniors. For the one student of color in the class the experience of film was different than that of his classmates. While the majority of the class took the message that college is possible for everyone with hard work, Melissa described that he had a different take away. She explained, “This student was like, no. There's some real structural reasons that not everybody makes it out of high school into college immediately.” She noted that the student had experienced “barriers of systemic racism that made that much harder for his family and for him to be there. He'd had to overcome more things than other people had.” In this experience Melissa was confronted with the challenge of wanting the student to share his perspective with the class, but she did not want to position him as a representative for all students of color. In navigating that experience she imagined herself in his shoes: “It would make it much more emotional I guess for me if I felt like I was having to represent everyone who looks like me or came from the same background.” Imagining the experiences of others is a framework Melissa actively utilizes in addressing the concept of privilege.

She acknowledges that while students in the setting of community college do not immediately recognize that they have privilege, she intentionally approaches the topic by asking them to question contexts of identity. She explains to students that when it comes to “socioeconomic class you have more barriers and struggles. But being a White person…the barriers aren't as high as they would be if you were a person of color or English wasn't your first language or any of these other things.” She
recognizes that it can be uncomfortable for students when they realize they have benefitted from privilege. Asking students to consider perspectives outside of their life experience connects to how Melissa defines diversity as both a concept and an action. As a concept she sees diversity as “a mix of things” ranging from opinions, socioeconomic class, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. In action she defined diversity as “first acknowledging that there are other ways of thinking, other ways of being, and then including them in whatever the conversation is.” This emphasis on incorporating diverse perspectives extends from her interactions with students to course content and her collaborations with fellow writing instructors.

Melissa has developed open educational resources for her courses, and her course readings are available digitally at no cost to students and in print through the bookstore for less than $12. Two years ago she was able to provide other writing instructors with grants “to discuss and create” open source materials, and this experience led to an opportunity for peer professional development. She described, “I got to see the people's classes and once you see how other people are teaching it, that really opened up some different ideas for me.” Melissa also networks through Twitter, and through this engagement and observing other instructors teach open educational resources she has developed a personal learning network. She has found “community with other writing instructors,” and she identified this as being particularly important in the context of community college. At the four-year college she felt that support for commitments to diversity “were happening at a visible and department level,” while in the community college setting she identified that support as “not something we do well. Not for a bad reason, but for a lack of time and lack of resource.” The connection
between setting and resources was further explored in Melissa’s experiences with institutional dialogues on diversity.

Over the last decade she has seen changes in the way diversity is talked about in higher education. While at the beginning of her career she saw discussions center around compositional diversity, now she sees that equity has replaced the term diversity and an emphasis on access and opportunity has been created. Yet, Melissa has found the dialogue “still unfortunately ends up coming down to demographic indicators…[and] that's really disappointing when we're talking about offering equitable access to students.” She also expressed concerns about representation on equity committees. She described members of those committees “often don’t look like our student population or our faculty population,” and that is problematic because “it doesn't always reflect diverse viewpoints or people who would have personal insight into some of these issues.” In thinking about why committees focused on equity may not reflect diverse identities, she pointed out the issue of finite faculty resources. Committee members are often “the coalition of the available” due to constraints of time.

Melissa believes that when diverse perspectives are not represented on committees, it is best to bring in those viewpoints. However, she recognizes this can create a “thorny problem” because it often relies on a spokesperson to represent a group. Unintended negative consequences can be generated despite best efforts. Melissa described,

Even with the best of intentions I think we often do harm…. and the harms that are done usually have very short-term consequences that we don't realize until
it's too late to really mitigate or fix them. So by not including enough diverse voices on a committee you might later go back and say, ‘oh, our decision was bad because we didn't have enough voices.’ But it doesn't fix what you did then.

She identifies the complexities of committee representation and decision-making as a challenge, however, she is encouraged by her college’s increasing commitment to measure the impacts of change.

Melissa explained that her institution is “slowly moving to an evaluation culture” through the development of progress assessments to measure action plans. While she is surprised that this area of focus is new, she is hopeful about the intersection between evaluation and diversity. She also acknowledged that evaluations of progress might yield mixed results:

I’m seeing measures around equity and access are being built into a lot of those and that makes me encouraged, but I don't know, in five years we might be like, oh man, we didn't do that right. I hope at least we'll have more data.

A desire for data emerged out of optimism and the realization that mistakes might be made along the way. The juxtaposition of feelings of inspiration and difficulty were described throughout Melissa’s engagement with students, course content, and committee service. A mingling of “really positive” and “really challenging” aspects was present for her as she recalled how her commitments to diversity have taken shape between the settings of four-year and two-year colleges.
James

Through mentorship, instruction, and service James works to create a space in which students and teaching assistants can explore emergent identities. Each term he supervises 30 graduate students as they instruct an English 101 course on their own for the first time as part of their teaching practicum. While these teaching assistants (TAs) follow the course structure that James has developed, they are encouraged to adapt assignments to make connections between their individual interests and what they are learning in the study of composition and rhetoric. He described that many of the TAs feel “really unmoored by teaching for the first time” as they navigate curriculum, interactions with students, and being students themselves in the first year of their MA and MFA graduate programs. Supporting these instructors as they experience “big identity shifts” is a large part of his role as a supervisor and mentor.

This is the first year James has taught the teaching practicum, and he is continually developing and revising a framework for how to support TAs as they settle into teaching. He noted, “what I'm figuring out is sort of how to be there with them” while they work through barriers. Although he can provide first-hand knowledge to counsel his TAs through many difficult situations, some barriers are outside of his life experience. As he recalled instances when TAs have confronted bullying in the classroom, he noted differences in relation to the experience of gender. He explained,

There has, at least so far, always been an element of sexism to it every time; it's been a female TA and male students who are disrespecting her. Which as a male WPA [writing program administrator] I can talk about, but not talk about from personal experience. As a gay WPA it's come up in my career a
little bit, but really not in the same way and not to the same degree. And also I still get to be a White man in a classroom, which gives me a position of authority that they don't have. So it's something that I can't quite prepare TAs for and also I can't experience with them exactly. I can try my best, but that's a limitation.

A connection between gender, privilege, and classroom dynamics developed through the acknowledgement of difference. Listening is a central component in James’ support for TAs. He checks in with them about “what it feels like to have to teach that student even if you don't want to, [and] how you can still respond with care even if you don't empathize in that situation.” This ethic of care is reflected in his own experiences with power and privilege in the classroom.

Early in his career James worked as an adjunct instructor at a community college on the East Coast. In his classes there were high populations of minority, first generation, and newly immigrated students. He was not provided with many course materials, so he developed his own content. He created a course framework that was “responsive to my students, and to whoever my students were, and whatever they knew how to do already, and to whatever they were interested in, and whatever use they could get out of this class.” James built a course structure that acknowledged students’ individual identities, skills, interests, and needs. The experience of creating responsive curriculum in the community college classroom was carried forward into his current instruction in a four-year university setting. He described the student population at his university as primarily White with over a quarter identifying as first
generation students. However, in the basic writing course that he teaches, the representation of students is different.

In James’ basic writing courses there are more students of color and first generation students. During his first term teaching the class he based the course around Freire’s problem-posing model to encourage students to become investigators of their personal and social contexts. He noted that this experience inspired students to reflect on their sense of place in the university. He described,

What I found was for students who recognize their outsider status in the university, for students who were not White, were not from the region, were not straight, were not whatever, they were able to identify this problem posing approach to their lives. They were able to recognize I have a problem here, and my problem is how to be a student here.

Through the problem-posing model students identified barriers and ways to intervene to implement change. James witnessed that his students “found themselves able to do academic work…that was meaningful to them and that they could be really good at.” This initial experience during his first quarter teaching at the university empowered him to commit to creating a space for non-traditional students across all courses in the English department. He believes that planning for non-traditional students should be an essential component to every course. This has been a challenging argument to make “just by the numbers and how they work out,” but that experience taught him “that diversity can exist even here where it doesn't feel like a diverse environment most of the time.” While he is inspired to bring diversity into the classroom, he also recognizes that it presents barriers for students.
James recalled one experience during his second term teaching the basic writing course in which a student felt alienated in the classroom. The student was the only White male in a class “of largely non-White students and women,” and he expressed that “he didn't have a place to say how he felt, he didn't have a place to argue for how he felt, and that everyone was against him.” To encourage this student’s success, James focused the student’s attention on developing work that was personally worthwhile. He explained that by emphasizing research as a means of self-exploration, students have the potential to create meaning. He noted that this helps direct students from “their feeling of being disenfranchised in the class toward finding…the work they want to do.” The ultimate goal of focusing on the work is for students to realize “that just because everyone's not like you here doesn't mean you aren't allowed to work on what you feel you need to work on.” While supporting students and TAs through barriers, James is committed to increasing diversity through program development.

In working to bring diversity practices from basic writing into the curriculum for English 101, he has encountered resistance from students. They have questioned practices, such as collaborative projects, that are designed to foster equity. The juxtaposition of being committed to diversity and experiencing barriers along the way inspires James to reflect on the values that support his teaching. He questions, “How do I balance my values about teaching with this particular context that I'm in now which is meant to serve everybody, and most of everybody is White, and a lot of everybody is resistant to diversity.” James refers to this reflective process as his “experiment continuing” as his commitments to diversity take shape through the
growth of the basic writing program and the development of a disability studies program. He has been working with institutional research “to get data to justify” the expansion of the basic writing program, and he has been collaborating with a literature colleague to develop disability courses in the English department. He is supported in his work in program development and diversity by his department and colleagues.

James’ department is “progressively minded as a whole” and they “really are interested in changing things.” Diversity is discussed and considered openly in hiring discussions. While the majority of faculty members in his department are White, the two most recent faculty hires are persons of color. James is encouraged in his work by his department chair, faculty mentor, and fellow composition and rhetoric colleagues. He was hired because of his focus on basic writing and disability studies, and this forms the foundation of his role in the department. He explained, “I have very good reason to spend my time on [diversity], and the department knows that's my specialty so they expect me to spend my time on it, even if they don't know what it is exactly.”

The contrast between experiencing a strong sense of place while also detecting ambiguity in purpose is particularly present in his work in the basic writing program. He noted that while fellow faculty members admire his work in basic writing, he does not feel it is acknowledged as academic work. For James it is academic work, and investing in the basic writing program is an essential component of his teaching, research, and service.

James believes diversity is at the foundation of the composition classroom. For him, diversity takes three different forms “as a thing you do verses as a thing you are verses as a feature of an environment.” In identifying diversity ‘as a thing you are’
he reflects on how characteristics of identity relate to power, privilege, and access in higher education. In the context of environment he notes a convergence between how people act, behave, and work together in a classroom. As a ‘thing you do’ he described the importance of creating a space for individuals to express their skills, knowledge, and ways of caring. He celebrates that no two students write like one another; this dimension of difference makes activities such as peer review possible. He emphasized, “For me diversity is the premise of a writing class.” In considering the relationship between diversity and the study of composition he noted, “I think the only way writing classes work is if we're different enough from each other in our interests, in our style, in our abilities.” He identified these differences as key to developing an empowering learning environment for students in the composition classroom.

Luke

Luke has been inspired to re-imagine his teaching through the framework of disability. He has “become extremely conscious of things missing in my instruction” in the process of developing curriculum to meet the needs of students who are marginalized by the traditional assignment structures in college composition courses. In making changes his goal is “that every assignment has built into it the option for a delivery…that would speak to the specific needs of a student.” One example he offered was creating the opportunity for deaf students to communicate parts of their papers through interpreters. It is important to Luke that these options are available to all students so they do not have to self-identify in order to receive accommodation. He believes that relying on self-identification is problematic because it places the burden on the student. He explained, “I'm trying to think about how many people are never
going to identify because it's not something they perceive that needs to be identified. Maybe it's something they're not even conscious of or aware of.” Building options into assignments for all learners removes the barrier of identification.

Acknowledging barriers in his assignments and instruction plays a large role in Luke’s commitment to diversity. He had an experience recently that is continuing to profoundly influence his approach to the teaching of writing. He was working with a deaf student who was writing a letter to the administration of the college challenging the lack of accommodation she received in her English classes. The moment he read her letter he “realized I didn’t teach her anything” in his English course. While he felt he contributed to the inequity she experienced, the rapport he developed with the student inspired her to want to work with him to revise the letter. He explained,

There was something about her wanting to sit down with me and look at the letter …knowing full well that she had just come out of my class and that I'm part of that problem. There's a level of trust that I think I felt inspired by. I felt like well, if I screwed up as a teacher, at least I connected with her as a person.

Luke began to question the ways in which instruction based on pronunciation and traditional syntax alienates deaf students. Working with the student helped him to recognize for the first time the differences between sign language and written English, and the experience “really changed” his thinking and course framework.

Disability informs Luke’s perspective professionally and personally. He has epilepsy, and while he has always openly talked about it with students and colleagues, he has begun to include in the conversation what it is like to live with an invisible disability. He recently disclosed his disability for the first time on an employment
form, and he participated in a public event where his story of living with epilepsy was shared. Through this personal exploration he was inspired to bring discussions of visible and invisible disability to students. He utilizes disability as “the framework where I approach power and privilege in classrooms.” Through the story of his experience with epilepsy he creates the opportunity for students to consider the contexts of privilege:

Here’s a thing where I don't have privilege, but here's the thing where I also do…So I've got this neurological thing that alters the way I live. It impacts my daily existence therefore I see it as a disability. But, oh my gosh, if you put me in a room with people that are epileptic, I drive. I work a full-time job. I take an insane amount of drugs, but I also don't have seizures on a regular basis that impact my public life. So even within that realm where…I belong to a group that's marginalized…I have some pretty big privileges.

This dialogue helps him create connections with students while simultaneously encouraging them to reflect on their identities. It opens the pathway for meaningful discussions about power and privilege, and he is intentional about how those discussions are shaped in the context of his classroom.

Luke acknowledges with his students the relationship between power and authenticity in the classroom. When he first started teaching he “wanted to do away with hierarchy in the classroom,” but he realized that regardless of how he felt, the students “perceived the power structure that was very real.” Now, he shows up authentically with students by talking about the areas in his life where he has privilege as a White male and the areas where he does not due to disability. While he is a US
citizen many of his students are not, and he described that they are “frightened of situations in the country around their citizenship status.” In the fall after the presence of immigration protest groups on campus he had six students who were immigrants drop out of his class and drop out of school entirely. All six students were doing very well academically, and they were active participants in his classroom community. As he described the situation to his colleagues who work in the English as a Second Language (ESL) program and have considerable experience working with immigrant students, they pointed out something that had not occurred to him. For many immigrant students their first interaction with law enforcement in the US is through a detention center. Luke’s colleagues described that for those students the police presence on campus to ensure safety might have “meant something different for them.” He never heard from the students and never found out why they left the college, and the experience left him questioning his role. He described, “I don’t know why they dropped out…they were gone and I kept wondering… if there was anything I could've done about that…it definitely struck me.” While he has not been able to answer if he could have changed the situation, the experience of learning from his colleagues and recognizing that events outside of the classroom have the potential to impact student success was important for him.

Luke’s recent experiences in the classroom have inspired him to question what it means to prepare to teach a course. This past term he experienced two classes with juxtaposing dynamics. In one course the students were supportive of each other, and they built an encouraging community both in the classroom and online. Luke described, “This was a class that exhibited love to one another in a very, very genuine
authentic way….I've never come away from a class with that thought in my mind before.” The level of care the students practiced with themselves and with others made an impact on him. At the same time he was also experiencing a completely different classroom environment in a GED preparation course where the students, while they were friendly and personable, did not commit to doing any work. Luke claimed openly, “I don't think I feel like I positively impacted very many students and only maybe 5% of the students even completed any work at all.” The combination of empowering and challenging experiences encouraged him to reflect on how prepared he was to teach the group of students who refused to do the work. For him, preparation is connected to diversity. He explained, “I think so much of working with diversity in classrooms is just stopping to recognize our own preparedness. I realized, wow, I'm not prepared for this group. I don't understand what I'm really negotiating.” As he recognized that he was not equipped to help those students succeed, a questioning of skills came into view.

In describing that experience, Luke questioned his qualifications for teaching the GED preparation course. He noted that he was given the course because he has experience volunteering in prisons, and many of the students in class had juvenile records. He explained that volunteering and teaching were a “totally different dynamic, but I think in my department size what they see is that, ‘Oh, [Luke’s] cool working with people with felonies, so that must make him qualified that he’s comfortable.’” While he was never told exactly which of his qualifications the department felt were valuable in teaching GED prep students, he is certain of what he learned about himself through the experience. He described his comfort in working
with students as valuable, but he openly admitted that comfort did not ensure skills. He explained, “What I realized was that I don't know how to manage a classroom full of people that just popped out of a juvenile detention center. I have no idea what I'm doing.” This self-realization inspired Luke to reflect on the connection between preparedness and qualifications.

Luke acknowledged that throughout his career flexibility has been an important asset. He takes classes when they need to be filled in order to meet the needs of his department, and that has led to him teach courses “that no one else wants to do.” He described ambiguity in receiving certain teaching assignments and noted that no one in the department expresses, “you're going to be the best person [and] this is why." This lack of communication about qualifications is accompanied by a lack of follow-up from the department about how he will structure courses. He explained, “There's no conversation…there's no one asking me what I'm going to be doing. They're just putting me there with this immense amount of faith that I'm going to magically be the best person to do it.” He acknowledged that his willingness to be flexible has been a benefit as an adjunct because he is regularly offered courses. Yet, he questioned the process by which instructors are assigned classes. He asked, “Are we looking at their credentials…their willingness to work with different groups…their willingness to do anything and not complain…or whether or not they're actually qualified, prepared to work with that population?” For Luke, being willing to serve the needs of the department and students does automatically ensure the skills to successfully teach.

Luke was drawn to the word complexity as he reflected on the definition of diversity and how it has evolved over his career. His early perspective was driven by
the perspective that “diversity is when there's a lot of different people [and] a lot of different types of people.” That has transformed, however, and now he sees diversity beyond single representations of difference. He explained, “complexity is a better representation of [diversity] because we tend to try to typify things when we think about diverse experiences or diverse classrooms instead of recognizing that sometimes differences exist simultaneously.” He illustrated his perspective through the point that unless he talks about having epilepsy or he has a seizure in the classroom, his disability goes unnoticed by students. He is “disabled and not disabled at the same time,” and this complexity in personal identity inspires him to see intersections in students’ identities.

**Shared Phenomenon**

Commonalities emerged between the lived experiences of Melissa, James, and Luke. When they were each asked the question, “how do you define diversity,” they all paused for reflection. Melissa’s first reaction was, “That's [a] good [question]. I don't know.” James expressed that he was “trying to think” through his response, and Luke noted that he was inspired to give a one word answer, but then he realized “I don't know why I'm trying to think of one word. You didn't ask for one word.” After their moments of reflection all of the participants described diversity not through a single statement, but through a description of how they see diversity impacting students. Two participants described how their view of the term has changed over time. Melissa explained,

I think the way that diversity is talked about has changed from what I've seen in the last 10 years. We now talk about equity instead of diversity. Equity of
access, equity of opportunity. Instead of ‘we need as many different people as possible,’ it's ‘we need to [provide] equitable access and opportunity for people.’

The comparison between experiences of the past and present also emerged for Luke. He explained that now he sees diversity as “complexity…partly because differences, obviously, [are] a part of diversity. If we're not celebrating difference and we're not operating from a mindset that acknowledges the importance of difference, then we're not actually going to be practicing facilitating diversity or encouraging it.” The elements of access and difference represented in Melissa and Luke’s descriptions were also present for James. In reflecting on the meaning of classroom diversity James described,

That to me feels like, well it's a link between the sort of environmental factors, and what people do, and how people behave, and how people work. I think that's about how you write differently…about how you care about things differently from one another…about how the content touches you or doesn't touch you, or whatever it may be. It's students having different facets from one another.

James’ response draws a connection between what diversity in the classroom “feels like” and how it emerges for students. Each of the participants used the term ‘difference’ and described embracing differences as part of the work of committing to diversity.

Melissa, James, and Luke explained that seeing students as individuals plays a major role in their course preparation. James creates opportunities for students to tailor
writing assignments to their interests. He explained, “It’s not about everyone writing about the same thing; it's about everyone trying to do this thing that they have to apply their own interest to.” Luke noted that throughout the quarter his course preparation “is driven by consideration of individual identities, individual academic needs, and often modifying assignments to suit that.” Melissa also spoke about gauging student needs throughout the quarter. She explained that she gets “the temperature of the class” as the term progresses, and she brings in content based on their interests.

Similarities between participants also emerged in their process for course planning.

In preparing for a course, all of the participants described working their way backwards. James begins by thinking about the final assignment and then builds content to facilitate experiences throughout the term. He noted that his learning disabilities have an impact on his approach to course planning:

I’m dyslexic, I have learning disabilities; I have most of my life known about it. And one of the things that I associate with that most is that I'm a very visual thinker. I tend to have a lot of trouble thinking through things linearly initially, so almost always my classes start at some kind of diagram. Either from a central word bubble to satellites, or lately I've been doing sort of more innate spirals, or other things that are really helpful for me to figure out what I want to cover before I have to worry about how I'm going to cover it. Once I've got sort of the initial landscape I know I want to cover, it's about the assignments for me.

Through James’ description, a connection surfaced between who he is as a learner and how he prepares for a classroom of learners. Luke and Melissa also work backwards
from course outcomes and then to assignments. Melissa described her basic writing courses as following a two part-series. The first portion of the term is devoted to thinking about the process of writing an essay, and the second half of the term is focused on reading and analysis. She emphasized, “Because I tend to work with lower level writers, we spend a little bit more time in the beginning on process.” Melissa’s experiences working with developing writers has influenced how she structures time in her courses. Luke provides the space in his writing classes for journal assignments that are “low stakes, ungraded, any format goes.” His goal for these assignments is to develop a space for students to explore concepts they might be struggling with without the pressures of formal assessment.

Each of the participants acknowledged that setting matters. Both Melissa and James described their institutions as lacking ethnic diversity. James asserted, “This a largely White population as a university,” and Melissa explained, “At both of the community colleges I've taught at we have very small populations of ethnic or racial minorities.” While Luke did not address the racial composition of his institution as a whole, he noted the diversity of students in his courses. He described that in the writing courses he teaches through the high school completion program,

I will typically have maybe 10 students that are trying to get their high school 21 diploma, and 10 to 12 students who are a mixture of folks coming out of the ESL program, immigrants or refugees who are very new to the language and are testing into it. So you get this interesting mix in the class with lots of students with real-world career experience or job experience, regardless of whether or not they have any kind of high school diploma. But then you also
get people from other countries with advanced degrees who simply aren't able to utilize those degrees, or whose degrees are not even recognized here. So you get a wide diversity in education as well as in language, but language is, I’ve found to be, probably the smallest barrier in the class.

Luke described diversity not only in terms of language, but also in terms of citizenship status, life experience, and educational goals. For Luke, Melissa, and James there was an awareness of both curricular and structural diversity in their lived experiences. Through their shared phenomenon diversity emerged as the experience of seeing students, of planning courses backwards, and paying close attention to setting.

**Summary**

This chapter represents the vocative dimension of phenomenological inquiry in the calling forward of participants’ voices. Findings were presented from three semi-structured interviews through storytelling. Each participant’s lived experience was explored individually to understand the singular aspects of curricular diversity. The analysis of their shared experiences presented universal aspects of the experience of diversity in the college composition classroom. A discussion of the findings through themes and in connection to the literature will be discussed in Chapter Five.
Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this phenomenological inquiry was to explore the diversity experiences of English composition faculty members who teach in colleges in the Pacific Northwest. The following research questions guided this investigation:

1. How are English composition faculty members experiencing diversity?
2. How are English composition faculty members describing the factors influencing their commitments to diversity?

Data were gathered and analyzed from three English composition faculty members. Participants were selected based on the criteria of having taught composition in the 2018-2019 academic year and having commitments to diversity that were identified through faculty biographies, teaching philosophies, and research publications. The participants had diverse educational backgrounds, academic interests, and employment statuses. Participants’ lived experiences with diversity were investigated in individual, semi-structured interviews that lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour. During the interviews participants shared stories about how their commitments to diversity have taken shape and how they have been supported and challenged in enacting those commitments. Past experiences were recalled, and descriptions of current and future endeavors were brought forth.

Phenomenology does not seek to build empirical generalizations or develop a relationship between experiential examples and a population (van Manen, 2016b). Rather, the aim is to understand the unique nature of lived experience and the universal essence of the phenomenon (van Manen, 2016b). This is achieved by exploring the individual experiences that are singular and those that reoccur across
accounts (van Manen, 2016b). The singular experiences were explored in the participants’ lived experience descriptions in Chapter Four. The universal aspects of the phenomenon of diversity in the college composition classroom will be explored here in a discussion of findings. The findings will be discussed by research question and organized by theme in connection to the literature and the conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Quotes for each theme will be given to maintain a connection between participants’ voices and the discussion of findings. This chapter will conclude with implications for research and practice and limitations to the study.

**Research question one: Experience of diversity**

The guiding principle of phenomenology is to understand how an individual experiences a phenomenon (van Manen, 2016a, 2016b). The first research question explored the diversity experiences of English composition faculty members. Three themes emerged through research question one: (a) comfort in the process of change, (b) conscious of alienation, (c) relationship building is key.

**Comfort in the process of change.**

Participants described their commitments to diversity through the process of investigation, action, and reflection. In transforming curriculum they noted that they were inspired to make changes based on what they discovered through research, in working with students, and by collaborating with colleagues. The actions they have taken have varying degrees of visibility. While changes to course readings and assignment structures can be observed, long-term changes through committee work and goals to expand programs are less visible. Reflection was a key component to the participants’ process. In preparing to make changes to her reading list to include
women authors Melissa noted, “It made me rethink; why do I always go to these same dudes?” (Interview, 2019). Participants used phrases such as “still investigating,” “it’s all experimental,” and “I’m redesigning” to describe the implementation of change. The process of enacting commitments to diversity was positioned as an ongoing effort rather than a singular experience.

Committing to diversity and making changes to curriculum have not been without challenges. The participants described encountering difficulties when students felt marginalized by a text or topic. Yet they did not indicate fear of losing self-identity or control as suggested by Weinstein and Obear (1992). A language of openness rather than fear characterized their approach to the process of change. Luke noted, “[I have] a level of comfort as a teacher with not being perfect or being done […] I'm comfortable being vulnerable around teaching […] it's become pretty foundational in my teaching philosophy too. Been huge” (Interview, 2019).

Participants did not express uncertainty through fear, but rather framed uncertainty as part of the process of growth. How or when this comfort in the process of change occurred in the participants’ teaching career presents an opportunity to be explored in further research. Bell et al. (1997) support the participants’ embrace of openness as a necessary component to confronting doubts about professional competency. Based on the success of his first quarter teaching basic writing at his institution James explained, “it made me feel like I could push students here. That I could argue for the importance of non-traditional students being part of not just the specialized basic writing course, but being central to every course that we plan for” (Interview, 2019). This experience
of inspiration provided the foundation for James to further his commitments to
diversity.

*Conscious of alienation.*

Each of the participants recounted helping students navigate feelings of
alienation in the classroom, and without hesitation they expressed deep concern over
students feeling marginalized. Their discussions of these experiences did not suggest
that these were isolated circumstances. Rather, supporting student growth was a part
of participants’ openness to the process of committing to diversity. For Melissa, this
took the shape of helping a student participate in a discussion about systemic barriers
to education “as he was comfortable…so that idea was represented without making
him the person who introduced it” (Interview, 2019). For Luke, the experience of
learning more about American Sign Language from a student helped him “understand
some of the ways in which sign language was so different from written English,” and
it inspired a transformation of his course assignments (Interview, 2019). James
reflected on parameters of preparation as he explained,

> How do you make sure [students] have privilege without making them
disenfranchised? I think that's something you do on a one-on-one basis as you
get really used to being a teacher…Knowing who your students are not as
generalities but as people is hard for new teachers to do because they're still
trying to figure out themselves in that context and because they have so little
time to practice really before they have to do it….A diversity focus can bring
up problems [and] can bring up difficulties for some students. I think it's worth
it, but it's hard. (James, Interview, 2019)
James’ insight results from his work supervising and mentoring teaching assistants. The reference to teaching experience highlights Golde and Dore’s (2001) report that doctoral candidates felt substantially less equipped for creating inclusive classroom environments. The challenge of navigating diversity while new to the experience of teaching persists.

The participants in this study had multiple years of experience in the classroom, and consistent with the findings of Considine et al. (2014) they had all experienced rewards and barriers in enacting their commitments to diversity. Key to their process of supporting students through feelings of alienation was their own self-reflection on privilege. All of the participants spoke directly about social identity in relation to power. Melissa discussed the implications of identity characteristics in connection to a lack of diverse representation. She noted that commitments to structural diversity fall short and are not “quite reflected in the committees themselves” because faculty committees do not include a diverse representation of voices (Interview, 2019). Two participants noted how their identity as White males visibly offered them privilege and authority in the classroom. Luke explained, “I'm White, I'm a male, and I'm talking about issues of gender and race. I feel like it's important that I acknowledg[e] those things and… that I'm not trying to hide aspects of that” (Interview, 2019). James described that as he encounters issues of sexism between female teaching assistants and male students he acknowledges that his position as “a White man in a classroom… gives me a position of authority that [the female TAs] don't have” (Interview, 2019). Literature has persistently indicated that female and minority faculty members have increased commitments to curricular
diversity (Hurtado, 2001; Milem, 2001; Nelson Laird, 2011; Nelson Laird et al., 2018). Noteworthy in this study for the two participants that identified as White males is also their self-identification of disability: Luke has epilepsy and James has dyslexia. In the most recent report of the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (Nelson Laird et al., 2018) it was noted that instructors with diverse “gender identity, racial/ethnic identity, and sexual orientation are more likely to engage in [diverse] practices” (p. 14). The lived experiences of Luke and James suggest that the category of disability might also be included in the social identity characteristics that influence commitments to curricular diversity.

**Relationship building is key.**

Literature on the implementation of active learning strategies indicates that faculty members are committed to learning about students in order to encourage participation (Nelson Laird, 2011; Nelson Laird et al., 2018). Participants in this study emphasized the importance of building relationships with students. Melissa noted when one of her students had difficulty she “knew him well enough that we were able to talk about it” and work out a plan for how he could approach class discussion (Interview, 2019). James explained that when students came to him with an idea to develop a minor in disability studies his reaction was “‘I love that idea’” (Interview, 2019). Luke emphasized that he learned more about ASL “as I started to talk” with a student outside of class (Interview, 2019). Bell et al. (1997) assert that it is necessary for faculty to invest in their own exploration of assumptions and bias in order to hold space for students as they are experiencing that process of growth. This works to
counter the fear of both marginalizing students and losing control of the classroom environment (Weinstein & Obear, 1992).

The act of seeing was essential for participants. Luke described his goal is create “learning spaces that are really seeing people for who they are” (Interview, 2019). James recognizes the classroom as space where “there are people who are learning to do something better” (Interview, 2019). Melissa explained that she gets to know students at the beginning of the term and builds course content around “readings that are relevant to what they’re interested in” (Melissa, Interview, 2019). These three elements of recognizing students’ identities, investing in learning as a process of development, and building course frameworks to meet the needs of the classroom are all represented in the third layer of Chesler et al.’s (2005) model. The perception of how students viewed content that challenged privilege and presented a diversity focus changed for participants between geographic, institutional, and academic landscapes. Each participant employed a comparison/contrast framework to describe differences in experience. From their lived experiences, differences between student characteristics at two and four-year institutions emerged, a lack of ethnic diversity in the student and faculty body was observed, and change in student demographics was noted between students enrolled in basic writing versus college composition. While all three participants have in the past academic year taught a variety of levels of writing, their lived experience descriptions of diversity were mainly focused on their experiences teaching basic writing.
Research question two: Factors of influence.

The second research question explored factors that empowered and challenged faculty members’ commitments to diversity. While the themes uncovered in the first research question confirmed elements in the internal and external dimensions of Chesler et al.’s (2005) model, through the second research question a more in-depth perspective on those elements was revealed and connections to the theory of reciprocal empowerment (Chun & Evans, 2009) were observed. Four themes emerged for research question two: (a) personal investment in diversity, (b) colleagues are vital to the enterprise, (c) representation is key, (d) resources are needed

Personal investment in diversity.

This study supports that social identity is an important factor in enacting commitments to diversity. This is consistent with Chesler et al.’s (2005) framework which positions personal connections as an element in the first layer of influence on a faculty member’s approach to multicultural teaching. Participants’ personal investments took the form of self-empowered learning that was not at the request of the institution or department. In redesigning her reading list Melissa noted, “I didn't tell my students; I wasn't like, oh, we read women....I don’t think they noticed” (Interview, 2019). Her commitment was driven by the personal desire to implement change. Likewise, Luke described that he is supported by his own “integrity” and the drive to create an “authentic experience for students” as learners in the classroom (Interview, 2019). Only one participant noted that he was hired in part because diversity is central to his position; the other two participants did not indicate how their commitments to diversity are connected to their positions. James explained, “I was
hired here because I have a background in basic writing; it's one of the things I do. Basic writing and disability studies are my specialties” (Interview, 2019). With the exception of family situation, all the elements in the first layer of influence in Chesler et al.’s (2005) model were represented in the participant experiences with diversity. As discussed in research question one, social identity was a factor that influenced participants’ approach to power and privilege. In their discussions of content and course structure participants explained how their style and skills intersect with diversity. They discussed the benefits of the readings they use, the assignments and grading contracts they have developed, and the theories of writing that are foundational to their teaching. Through their lived experiences the perspective of teacher-as-learner emerged.

Consistent with the findings of Considine et al. (2014), the participants in this study were engaged as learners in their own development. This was related not only to content and experimentation with style and skill; it also was connected to personal ways of being. One participant explained that his recognition of bias in the classroom is changing his thinking. He described,

If I can own those moments, if I can see them when they happen and just make a mental note of it and then make more than a mental note of it, it makes me …in my teaching experience feel a lot more confident that this is going somewhere. This isn't something that I've just been investigating and I'm trying to do something with. No, it's becoming something [that’s] affecting the way I think. (Luke, Interview, 2019)
The changes made by participants resulted from a pattern of awareness, action, and reflection. While their self-determination was rooted in personal values, external influences offered support and presented barriers in their commitments to diversity.

**Colleagues are vital to the enterprise.**

Self-determination is at the center of Chun and Evans’ (2009) framework for reciprocal empowerment, and it is enhanced or oppressed by external factors within a department and the institution (Chesler et al., 2005). While participants’ lived experiences show that they are supported by their personal investments in diversity, they also attest to the importance of the support they receive from colleagues. One participant explained,

In the steps that are sort of available to change things, folks really are interested in changing things. So I've been encouraged in the work that I do. I've been left mostly to my own devices, but our department chair, [my] faculty mentor, and my colleagues in composition and rhetoric have all been very supportive. (James, Interview, 2019)

Each of the participants noted that colleagues in their departments and in their personal learning networks supported their commitments to diversity. Luke explained that he has “the support of colleagues who do things that I've never thought about or I could never think about….I'm supported by people who tell me the things about my teaching that are meaningful that I don't think I give enough credit to” (Interview, 2019). Melissa has found “community with other writing instructors…through developing open educational resources” (Interview, 2019). Congruent with the literature, departmental support builds community between faculty members (Altbach,
While only one participant specifically mentioned mentorship, the two other participants described benefitting from collaboration and receiving feedback from colleagues. Chun and Evans (2009) highlight the importance of establishing partnerships to empower commitments to diversity and combat oppression. By building social networks that span across social circles, faculty members have the opportunity to share resources that they might not otherwise have access to (Lin, 2001).

**Representation is key.**

While participants were supported in their commitments to diversity through personal values and their colleagues, they described issues of representation as a challenge. Melissa explained that while committees focused on promoting equity “act representative,” they lack voices from diverse participants (Interview, 2019). James noted the juxtaposition between institutional setting and his commitment to empowering diversity. He questioned, “How do I balance my values about teaching with this particular context that I’m in now which is meant to serve everybody, and most of everybody is White, and a lot of everybody is resistant to diversity.” The elements of committee representation and the expectations of setting are identified by Chesler et al. (2005) and Chun and Evans (2009) as external factors of influence on faculty decision-making. These factors have the potential to promote a climate that embraces diversity or keep in place barriers that foster oppression (Chun & Evans, 2009). The frameworks of both Chesler et al. (2005) and Chun and Evans (2009) suggest that the institutional, departmental, and personal dimensions are interrelated. This is noted in Luke’s perception,
I'm literally thinking about my job. I'm thinking, I don't have a permanent status there. I don't have tenure. I don't have any of the things that would make me feel confident to say, ‘Okay, I'm going to be the one that fights for this group.’ It would be just as simple to let me go as to let anybody else who complains about these things go. The only people that are vocally bringing those complaints are the people with tenure, the people that feel they have the strength. (Luke, Interview, 2019)

Through this reflection a connection is made between a lack of security and a questioning of action. The desire to speak up for change is impeded by the perception of consequences to employment. Prilleltensky and Gonick (1996) describe this barrier of participation as means of perpetuating oppression from external structures. As noted in the literature, the variation between faculty experiences according to rank persists (Clark 1987; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Moghtader et al., 2001; Ruscio, 1987).

While all three participants are involved in service through committee work, the participant with a part-time teaching appointment was the only person to express hesitation about voicing his concerns on committees.

**Resources are needed.**

Through reciprocal empowerment faculty are positioned as the necessary “intellectual and creative capital” to instill change in institutions (Chun & Evans, 2009, p. 16). Faculty members have the potential to be a powerful resource in the decision-making hierarchy of higher education institutions (Chun & Evans, 2009; Smith, 2009). The two participants employed at community colleges described a gap in faculty resources for professional development and committee work. This stands in
contrast to the findings from the Coalition on the Academic Workforce (CAW, 2010) that indicated an increased percentage of teacher-development workshops in community colleges versus four-year institutions. A connection between a lack of resources, faculty preparation, and diversity is explored in Luke’s experience:

I haven't seen anything where departments are doing that work and then bringing that to teachers prior to the experience of teaching and then saying, ‘Okay, how can we prepare to work with this group? Like okay, guess what? You're going to have a deaf student in your class this quarter. How are you going to deal with that? How are you going to approach that?’ Because there's more to it than just the interpreters. (Luke, Interview, 2019)

The lack of preparation is positioned as a trickle-down barrier from the department to instructors. This is echoed in Melissa’s experience at the community college as she describes, “we have so much trouble getting anybody to be involved in the running of the college because there's so much other stuff happening” (Interview, 2019). The perceived lack of preparedness in working with diverse groups of learners is established in the literature and persists in this study (Bell et al., 1997; Considine et al., 2014; Stolzenberg et al., 2019; Weinstein & Obear, 1992).

All three participants expressed the need for data. They need data in the form of student demographics, persistence rates, and evaluations of the effectiveness of action plans. They hope these data points will help them make more informed decisions, be better prepared to work with students, and be of use in growing programs. It was acknowledged that data could benefit individual faculty members, departments, and institutions as a whole. In the call for data as a resource, there is a
potential for unity between the internal and external factors of influence on faculty commitments to diversity. Boudett, City, and Murnane (2015) explain that when data are used collaboratively the pathway for “evidence to drive conversations about learning and teaching” emerges (p. 216).

**Summary of Themes**

For the participants, the experience of diversity is expressed through a commitment to the process of change, being conscious of alienation in the classroom, and building relationships with students. The influence of personal connections in Chesler et al.’s (2005) model expressed through style, knowledge and skills, and social identity is represented in this study. Only one dimension, family situation, was not expressed in the findings. The external layers of Chesler et al.’s (2005) model and the framework of reciprocal empowerment (Chun & Evans, 2009) were described in the participants’ perceptions of barriers and support. Participants described being supported in diversity work by their personal values and their colleagues, and they experience barriers of representation and resource.

**Implications for Professional Practice**

The findings in this study revealed recommendations for professional practice. All of the participants described receiving support from colleagues. However, noteworthy in their experiences were the opportunities they had to see the course framework, content, and practices of other instructors. Of benefit would be dedicated time within departments for composition faculty to share resources, visit each other’s classrooms, and collaborate. These professional learning networks would offer faculty
the opportunity to share ideas and break through the isolation of teaching alone (Considine et al., 2014).

Professional development remains a key area—particularly for community college faculty—that could benefit from improvement. The participants in this study who teach in two-year colleges described professional development as being a challenge. The faculty inquiry group (FIG) is one framework designed for professional development in community colleges. A four-stage cycle of inquiry, research, data gathering, and findings review is followed in the model (Huber, 2008). It is noted that the relationship in FIGs between inquiry and collaboration with colleagues can “give new direction to curriculum design, support the impact of co-curricular interventions, and breathe life into larger institutional agendas like assessment and accreditation” (Huber, 2008, p. 2). This framework also connects to the third recommendation for professional practice that surfaced in this study.

The participants expressed the need for data to support program development, course preparation, and committee action plans. They each positioned data as a necessary component in increasing diversity commitments. Boudett et al. (2015) assert that data are not only expressed through formative assessment practices, but also through a “broad array of other information on student skills and knowledge” (p. 2). Data have the potential to promote collaboration, reflection, and organizational learning through a commitment to action, assessment, and adjustment (Boudett et al., 2015). The call for increased data in professional practice connects to implications for future research.
Implications for Future Research

The need for data highlighted by the participants in this study promotes an assessment of data needs of English composition faculty members. Currently, the four national surveys of faculty diversity—the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey, the Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE), the Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) Faculty Survey, and the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) Diversity and Equity Campus Climate Survey—do not include survey items to measure the institutional or departmental climate of data assessment. Little is known on a national scale about the types of data faculty have access to and the implementation strategies inspired by those data sets. One solution to this issue on a localized scale is the commitment by departments to explore their faculty members’ data needs.

While each of the participants have in the past academic year taught a range of composition courses from basic to advanced writing, the majority of their lived experience descriptions emerged through stories from their basic writing courses. Although perceptions abound that the need for basic writing is exclusive to two-year institutions, the National Center for Education Statistics reports that 11% of students at four-year public colleges and universities enrolled in at least one developmental English course between 2003 and 2009 (Chen, 2016). In two-year colleges 28% of students enrolled in at least one developmental English course (Chen, 2016). It is of benefit across institutional settings to gain an understanding of how diversity experiences in basic writing influence faculty members’ teaching practices overall.

The findings of Nelson Laird et al. (2018) indicate that faculty members who
have experienced oppression due characteristics of gender, racial, and sexual identity have increased commitments to curricular diversity. Two participants in this study identified as having disabilities. Currently, only two of the four national quantitative survey measures—the CECE and HEDS—enquire into faculty members’ commitments to diversity and their disability status. To answer the call by Nelson Laird et al. (2018) for institutions to elevate the opportunities for instructors from a broad range of social identities to engage in learning from one another, it would be beneficial to measure the characteristic of disability across quantitative and qualitative assessments of faculty diversity commitments.

**Limitations**

While ensuring integrity to van Manen’s (2016a, 2016b) framework for hermeneutic phenomenology was at the core of this study, limitations are present that potentially impact these findings. The participants in this study all have commitments to diversity as stated through faculty biographies, CVs, publications, or teaching philosophies. The perspectives of participants that did not visibly declare commitments to diversity were not included. All of the participants in this study are active in their departments and institutions through service. However, literature on faculty culture and identity points out not all faculty members, particularly those who work adjunct appointments, hold service requirements (Clark 1987; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Ruscio, 1987). Additionally, a variation of racial identities was not achieved; all of the participants in this study identified as White.

During the interviews it became clear that participants’ extensive experiences in the classroom provided a bank of recollections from which to draw. The
participants’ time teaching ranged from nine to 20 years, and while this level of expertise provided rich opportunities for a variety of lived experiences it also carried with it a limitation. The experiences of new instructors or those with less than five years in the classroom were not explored in this study. One of the participants, James, spoke openly about how the teaching assistants he mentors every term experience increased barriers because they are in the process of shaping their identities as teachers. Future research examining new faculty members’ lived experiences would be of benefit to investigate whether time teaching has an impact on commitments to curricular diversity.

Creswell and Poth (2018) emphasize that because the researcher is a key instrument in qualitative study, it is essential to employ validation strategies to account for researcher bias. Van Manen’s (2016a, pp. 350-51) four questions of validity were central to the quality of this phenomenological study:

1. *Is the study based on a valid phenomenological question? In other words, does the study ask, “What is the human experience like?” “How is this or that phenomenon or event experienced?”* This study was designed to explore the diversity experiences of English composition faculty members who teach in colleges in the Pacific Northwest. The two research questions—(1) How are English composition faculty members experiencing diversity, and (2) How are they describing factors influencing their commitments to diversity—were grounded in understanding the nature of their lived experiences.

2. *Is analysis performed on experientially descriptive accounts, transcripts? (Does the analysis avoid empirical material that mostly consists of*
perceptions, opinions, beliefs, views, and so on?) The semi-structured interview questions and prompts were designed to access experiential accounts, and they were based on concepts identified in the conceptual framework and literature on faculty commitments to diversity. The interview questions were focus on the reaching the primal impressions of the participants’ experiences rather than their judgments of those moments (van Manen, 2016a, 2016b).

3. *Is the study properly rooted in primary and scholarly phenomenological literature—rather than mostly relying on questionable secondary and tertiary sources?* Van Manen’s (2016a, 2016b) framework for hermeneutic phenomenology informed every aspect of the design of this study from the philosophical foundation, sampling approach, interview style, validation criteria, data gathering and explication, and discussion of findings. The research gap of this study identified limited qualitative focus on the nature of faculty experiences with curricular diversity.

4. *Does the study avoid trying to legitimate itself with validation criteria derived from sources that are concerned with other (non-phenomenological) methodologies?* The methods and language of this study differ from the four other approaches to qualitative inquiry. To honor that validity is determined in hermeneutic phenomenology through “the originality of insights and the soundness of interpretive processes,” validity was established in this study through the integrity of hermeneutic methods and the richness of experiential accounts (van Manen, 2016b, p. 348).
Conclusion

The call to increase diversity in higher education persists at the national, institutional, and departmental levels (Chun & Evans, 2009; Gurin et al., 2002; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2017; Nelson Laird et al., 2018). For the participants in this study, a commitment to diversity remains at the center of their work. Their efforts take a variety of forms expressed through curriculum, interactions with students, program development, and committee work. This involvement impacts all three layers of faculty life between teaching, service, and research. This study reveals that faculty commitments to diversity are not made in isolation. Their commitments are connected to their personal values, the support received from colleagues, and to the goal of empowering student learning. Their work is not without challenges, however. Participants spoke openly about needing the resources of professional development, data, and committee representation to empower their efforts.

These findings suggest that there is a connection between individual voices and the institutional systems that support and challenge their commitments to diversity. Chun and Evans (2009) offer the reminder that “an effective change model for diversity requires the incorporation of diversity in structural processes and organizational practices to ensure long-term sustainable results” (p. 62). By listening to the lived experiences of instructors, an understanding of how diversity is taking shape in the classroom is built. This research suggests that departments and institutions looking to increase curricular diversity might consider exploring the nature of faculty members’ experiences to understand their needs for resources. As one
participant noted, “We want to figure out what's going on in our classrooms, what the impact of our actions are, [and] what additional things are embedded into our institutions that we are perpetuating so we know which battles to continue or to begin fighting” (Luke, Interview, 2019). There is more to know in order to understand where and how we should move forward as educators.
References


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Appendix A

Email Recruitment Letter to Participants

Dear Professor XXX,

My name is Jessica Lorenz, and I am conducting diversity research as part of my doctoral dissertation in the School of Education at the University of Portland. This letter is to provide you with the opportunity to participate in the project. The purpose of this study is to explore the diversity experiences of freshman composition faculty.

**Why does this study matter to higher education?** Current research indicates the extent to which diversity is incorporated in the classroom through active learning techniques and curriculum. However, less is known about the nature of the decision-making process as faculty members enact commitments to diversity. This study is guided by two research questions: (a) How are English composition faculty members experiencing diversity? (b) How are English composition faculty members describing the factors influencing their commitments to diversity?

**How to participate?** Participation in this study is voluntary and confidential. Participating involves a face-to-face or online semi-structured interview that should take approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The interview will be audio recorded for transcription. In the report of findings pseudonyms will be given to protect individual identities, and the names of institutions of employment will be not be listed. Prior to the start of the interview I will read the Informed Consent agreement (see attached) and obtain your signature.

**How will the results be used?** The results of this study will be reported in a dissertation and may be used in future reports and presentations. The researcher will not identify participant names or institutions in any current or future report of the findings.
What will happen next? If you are interested in participating, please respond to me with an email so we can set up a time for the interview and a location that is convenient to you. The interviews would take place during March-April.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. If you have any other questions, please contact me at 301.412.8625 or email me at lorenzj19@up.edu. You may also contact my faculty chair Dr. Sally Hood by emailing her at hood@up.edu or by phone at 503-943-7226. Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant should be directed to the University of Portland Institutional Review Board, via email at irb@up.edu. The study has received approval through the University of Portland IRB process.

Best,

Jessica Lorenz
Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Jessica Lorenz from the University of Portland School of Education Doctoral Program. The purpose of this study is to explore the diversity experiences of college composition faculty. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have taught composition during 2018-2019 and because your faculty biography/CV/teaching philosophy indicated a commitment to diversity.

If you decide to participate in the study, you will be asked to complete a semi-structured interview regarding your experiences with diversity. The interview should take approximately an hour. The interview will be recorded and transcribed, and you will receive a copy of the transcription for review.

The identity of participants, their institution of employment, and names of any other persons that come up in the interview will be kept confidential. Participants will be given alphabetical pseudonyms (Participant A) in the findings. The document listing participant names and assigned pseudonyms will be accessed solely by the researcher, kept in a password-protected file, and destroyed at the conclusion of the study in June 2019. The interview recording will be heard by the researcher and a third party transcriber. The transcriber has signed a non-disclosure agreement.

There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this study. The findings will benefit the researcher’s knowledge and contribute to the understanding of diversity in the field of college composition. The results of this study will be reported in a dissertation and may be used in future reports and presentations. The researcher will not identify participant names or institutions in any future report of the findings.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participating in the study at any time without penalty or prejudice. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me at lorenzj19@up.edu or 301-412-8625. You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Sally Hood at 503-943-7226 or hood@up.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB (IRB@up.edu). You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.
Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above and that you willingly consent to participate in the study. You will receive a copy of this form for future reference.

Your Signature: ________________________________
Your Name (printed): _________________________________________________
Date: _________________