PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVES: EXPLORING HOW STUDENT AFFAIRS

PROFESSIONALS APPROACH WORKING WITH STUDENTS OF COLOR

by

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(Under the Direction of Chris Linder)

ABSTRACT

Nine student affairs professionals shared stories of working with students of color in various higher education environments, and the challenges associated with their work. Critical race theory was used as the theoretical framework for this study, along with a narrative inquiry methodology. Participants shared their stories through two interviews, and the sharing of an artifact that symbolized their approach to working with students of color. The stories shared by the participants revealed insight about how they approached their work with students of color and what informed their approaches. The various approaches shared by the participants included attending student events and advocating for students to senior administrators. Mentoring and supporting relationships proved to be significant to the majority of participants in the study, offering guidance to the participant's approaches. These relationships also helped the participants decide to pursue careers in student affairs.

The findings of this study suggest that narratives can lead to a greater understanding of how student professionals of color work to support students of color within their institutional environments. Utilizing their narratives, senior university administrators can make time for

student affairs professionals to share their stories, to better understand their identities and needs as they work with students of color. Professionals of color need support, which can be provided through communities composed of other professionals of color. Further, it is important for White student affairs professionals to be engaged in supporting professionals of color in the dismantling oppression. White professionals must also be equipped to engage with students of color. The role of higher education and student affairs graduate programs should also be explored as an area for future research, to consider different ways that student affairs professionals can receive knowledge and skills to support them in their work with students of color.

INDEX WORDS: Student Affairs professionals, students of color, race, racism, equity, diversity, inclusion, narrative inquiry, student affairs practice, working with students of color

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DEDICATION

This document is dedicated to my mother, Yet Chow. Thank you for being an example of strength and perseverance. You have provided love, support, and encouragement at every step of the way. Your hard work and sacrifice have made this possible. I am because of you.

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INTRODUCTION

"We had to give up the familiar and enter a world that seemed cold and strange, not our world, not our school. We were certainly on the margin, no longer at the center, and it hurt" (hooks, 1994, p. 24). These words used by bell hooks in retelling her thoughts about attending her 20th and first racially integrated high school reunion eloquently describe the marginalization and oppression students and people of color continue to experience in higher education today. As students of color across the nation have confronted racism on their campuses and voiced concern over lack of institutional support, my interest in exploring the influence of race and racism has taken shape. Exploring racism through a lens of equity, diversity, and inclusion in my doctoral coursework provided the knowledge to question and better understand the experiences for students affairs professionals and their work with students of color. Through this study, I aim to connect knowledge to practice. I seek to understand how student affairs professionals may better approach working with students of color, through exploration and interrogation of student affairs practice. I also continue to question how I can contribute to shaping positive and inclusive environments through my research and practice.

Students' Resistance to Racism in Higher Education

Student protests and responses to racialized events have re-centered attention on race and the influence of racism on college campuses. The notion of a post-racial for people and students of color has been challenged by student activists (Gismondi & Osteen, 2017). Demonstrations and protests represent students' voices and resistance to racism within campus environments. A

focus on campus racialized events and student protests can provide understanding about how student affairs professionals approach their work with students of color. Each of the protest and demonstration represents students' advocacy towards institutional and cultural change, which requires administrators to examine institutional structures, policies, and attitudes (Goodman, 2012). While this study is not focused on student activism, I explore several racialized events, protests, and demonstrations to highlight recent experiences for students of color and deepen the understanding of student affairs work with students of color. The events presented in this section ignited my interest in exploring how student affairs professionals approach working with students of color. I included the events to explore the challenges faced by students of color in order to question how professionals are helping students of color navigate their experiences.

Over the last several years, a series of racist events occurred nationwide. The murder of Trayvon Martin in 2012 refocused attention of American citizens on racism, discrimination, and the murders committed against people of color (Capehart, 2015). In July 2013, a jury decided Martin's killer was not guilty of murder, which prompted considerable dissent and ushered in a new era of focus on racial inequality, and the brutality and violence people of experience with police (Capehart, 2015). Following Martin's murder, three women started a movement known as #BlackLivesMatter, to bring attention to police violence perpetrated against people of color (Rhoads, 2016; Willison, Boutwell, Gentlewarrier, Kling, & McLaren, 2016). The movement intensified attention on racism and discrimination. While the #BlacksLivesMatter movement did not originate within higher education, it has inspired and motivated students of color and faculty to address discrimination and racism through student protests, scholarship, and instruction (Rhoads, 2016). Since Martin's death, other murders have occurred. Each killing has provided another reminder of racist and oppressive systems that influence individuals' perspectives about

race. Martin's murder and the murder of other Black men are reminders of the continued

existence of racism and the unequal treatment experienced by people of color.

Following a sequence of racial incidents on campus, including students' reactions to the

killing of an unarmed black man in Ferguson, Missouri, students at the University of Missouri

(Mizzou) voiced their unrest (Jaschik, 2015). In response to the shooting of Michael Brown in

Ferguson, the student government president at Mizzou used Facebook to draw attention to the

institution's lack of a response (Pearson, 2015). Feeling a continued lack of response, students

protested. Students at Mizzou organized further protests and issued a list of demands, including

the removal of the campus Chancellor and the system President (Jaschik, 2015; Mangan, 2016;

Pearson, 2015). The university has since hired a chief diversity officer and initiated required

diversity training for all incoming students (Brown, 2016), but many individuals remain skeptical

if sufficient change has been enacted. Rather than responding proactively, administrators

reacted, stating an inability to prevent individuals' use of racialized language within the

university community (Mangan, 2016). Reactive responses only address the singular event

without addressing any larger issues within the campus racial climate (Davis & Harris, 2016).

Continued and consistent responses to student needs allows both students and administrators to

work through more complex issues like racism or a negative campus climate over time.

Numerous student protests and demonstrations have occurred since the Mizzou protests, but it is

still unclear how student affairs professionals are supporting students of color within racist and

oppressive campus cultures.

Mizzou was certainly not the only institution where students led protests or voiced

concern about the challenges faced by students of color. In 2015, students at Claremont

McKenna College (CMC), protested racial bias towards students of color from campus

administrators, particularly the Dean of Students. Students initiated a hunger strike, resulting

from an e-mail exchange between the Dean of Students and a Latina student where the Dean

stated some students may not fit into the "CMC mold" (Wantanabe, 2015). Students at the

University of California at Berkeley protested, demanding physical space for students of color

(Scott, 2016). At the College of William and Mary, the university president refused to respond

to demands made by students supporting Black Lives Matter, asserting that he does not entertain

demands (Berrien, 2017). Students involved with the Afrikan [sic] Student Union at the

University of California at Los Angeles, have made numerous demands, including requesting a

$40 million-dollar endowment, physical space on campus, and cultural awareness training to

address racial attacks on campus (Airaksinen, 2017). More recently, Evergreen State College

received national attention for a list of demands presented to the university president with issues

ranging to changes to the student code of conduct and the termination of a professor described as

discriminatory (Quintana, 2017). Students associated with campus protests and demonstrations

described communication from campus administrators as dysfunctional, stating administrators

ignored previous suggestions from students of color (Berrien, 2017). Listening to the needs of

students of color allows faculty, staff, and administrators to understand their experiences. When

administrators listen, they recognize the challenges that exist and can make changes for more

inclusive campus environments.

Student unrest and movements like #BlackLivesMatter have inspired students of color to

voice their experiences and demand fair and equitable treatment within campus environments

(Willison et al., 2016). Each of the experiences described above, including the many events not

mentioned, have directed attention on racism for senior leaders in higher education. However,

little attention focuses on how student affairs professionals approach working with students of

color. While this study does not focus on student unrest or activism, the above events prompted me to look more closely at the experiences of student affairs professionals and their work with students of color. I was compelled by the racialized events and protests to better understand approaches to working with students of color and what can be done to better support students of color as they navigate their college experiences. Student affairs professionals help students through their experience, which can include moments of unrest or activism. I have highlighted instances of student activism above to emphasize the importance of working with students of color and addressing challenges that students of color with encounter. Through this study, I focused attention on student affairs professionals' perspectives and their daily work with students of color. Through this focus, I share knowledge to transform campus environments by naming racism and promoting more inclusive approaches to support students of color.

Statement of the Problem

Nationwide, students of color have expressed resistance and voiced their dissatisfaction with historically exclusive and racist campus environments, experiences with microaggressions, and systems that have maintained oppressive, sexist, classist, and imperialistic environments (Hardiman, Jackson, & Griffin, 2013; Jaschik, 2015; Mangan, 2016; Pearson, 2015; Scott, 2016; Wantanabe, 2015; Willison, et al., 2016). Students' unrest has manifested through student protests, demonstrations, and demands (Rhoads, 2016). Racism and microaggressions are an ingrained element of the college experience for students of color, which negatively impacts these students through oppressive and marginalizing experiences (Boatright-Horowitz, Frazier, Harps-Logan, & Crockett, 2012; Diver-Stamens & Lomascolo, 2001; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, & Sriken, 2014; Rankin, & Reason, 2005). Whereas students of color experience microaggressions and encounter difficulty connecting to the institution, White

students experience privilege and rarely experience racial discrimination (Boatright-Horowitz, et al., 2012; Laird & Niskodé-Dossett, 2010). Campus environments also contain buildings named after wealthy White men. Many of these men participated in keeping people of color out of the institution, affirming a racist and oppressive history (Pratt, 2002). With this context, what are student affairs professionals doing with their work with students of color…

The responses of institutional administrators to the demonstrations and demands of students of color have begun to receive attention in research and scholarship (Davis & Harris, 2016; Strayhorn, 2013); however, responses vary between institutions. Higher education scholars are beginning to focus on institutional responses, but they have not yet applied the same focus to staff, specifically student affairs professionals. For example, written responses to racialized incidents often come from senior level administrators lacking action-oriented language, an over-reliance on remorse and regret, with about claiming responsibility or acknowledging systemic racism and institution challenges that led to the event (Cole & Harper, 2016; Davis & Harris, 2016). Senior level administrators also view students' demands for increased faculty of color or physical spaces, like cultural centers, as combative, rather than as essential resources (Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, & Barnett, 2005). Dismissing students' needs or requests does little to address racism or systemic causes of oppression (Cole & Harper, 2016; Hardiman, et al., 2013). Strayhorn (2013) also recognized the role of campus policies and responses in shaping students' perception about their institution. Likewise, the daily responses and approaches of student affairs professionals with students of color has not received attention in research and scholarship (Bensimon, 2007). Given the insufficient institutional responses, it is important to understand how students of color are engaged and receive support from student affairs professionals. How are student affairs staff working with students of color on a daily

basis? While research and scholarship does examine the experiences of students of color, current research does not focus on how student affairs professionals support students of color. Current research also does not provide information about how student affairs professionals develop their approaches to working with students of color.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to better understand how student affairs professionals approached working with students of color. I sought to learn more about how student affairs professionals support students of color, and what informs their approaches. I defined a student affairs professional as an individual employed full-time in a role or function that focused on supporting the needs of students through a program or service, and with daily student interaction (Rosser & Javinar, 2009). Utilizing narratives, I explored nine student affairs professionals' perspectives and experiences working with students of color. Eight of the nine participations also identified as a person of color, focusing this study on how professionals of color work with students of color. I focused on the intersection of professionals' interactions with students of color, their approaches to the work, and the influence of racism and microaggressions (Figure 1). Student affairs professionals, by the nature of their profession work directly and often with students (American College Personnel Association, 1994; American Council on Education, 1937, 1949). I used critical race theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework to identify and name the presence of power and privilege in the professionals' narratives, critiquing structures of power and marginalization (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My focus on student affairs professionals brought a spotlight to their daily interactions with students of color, how they responded to these interactions, and what influenced their approaches to the work.
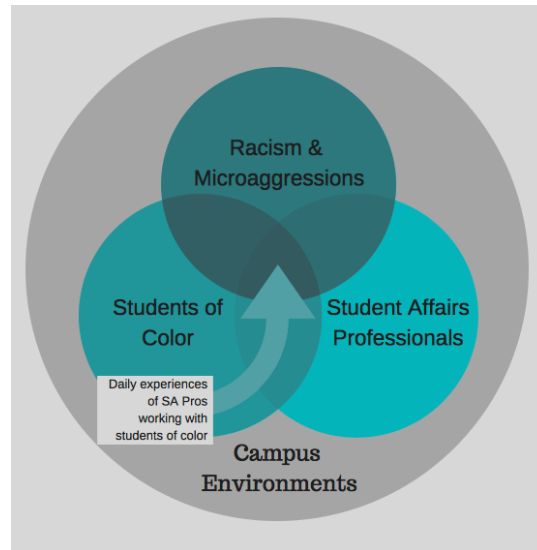
Figure 1: The study will focus on the approaches of student affairs professionals in their work with students of color through the intersection of daily work experiences, interactions with students of color, and the influence of racism and microaggressions.

Student Affairs Professionals' Perspectives of Working with Students of Color

Through an exploration of approaches to working with students of color, I sought to understand how students of color are supported by student affairs professionals. Microaggressions are, in part, influenced by racism. Students of color are a primary target of both racism and microaggressions. Student affairs professionals serve as helpers within college environments, providing support, guidance and mentorship to students (Reynolds, 2011), regularly interacting with students of colors through a variety of programs and services. Additionally, higher education and student affairs (HESA) graduate programs provide professionals with knowledge to understand how environments influence students and their experiences (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, & Molina, 2009). This knowledge allows professionals to facilitate programs and services that support students of color and their needs (Poon, Squire, Hom, Gin, & Segoshi, 2016). As a result of their frequent interactions with students of color

student affairs professionals can offer important insight to guide institutional responses to address the needs and demands of students of color (Bensimon, 2007; Davis & Harris, 2016). This insight will add to the understanding of how student affairs professionals engage students of color and what informs or prepared them for working with students of color. The following questions guided this study:

1. In what ways do student affairs professionals work with students of color at predominantly and historically white institutions?

2. What informs student affairs professionals' approaches to working with students of color?

Significance of the Study

Little research includes the perspectives of student affairs professionals about their work and interactions with students of color (Bensimon, 2007; Dickerson, Hoffman, Anan, Brown, Vong, & Bresciani, 2011; Reynolds & Altabef, 2015). Research about student affairs professionals often centers around competencies for professionals from the perspectives of students, faculty, and upper-level administrators (Cuyjet, et al., 2009; Dickerson, et al., 2011). The perspective of faculty and student affairs administrators focuses on naming the requisite knowledge, skills, and attitudes for student affairs professionals, including student development theory, assessment practices, problem-solving, and awareness of diversity related topics, among others knowledge and skills (Kuk, Cobb, & Forrest, 2007; Dickerson, et al., 2011). Student affairs professionals are the front-line staff working with students daily. However, few opportunities allow student affairs professionals to share their lived experiences and insights (Allen & Cherry, 2003). Minimal research explores the relationship and interaction between professionals and students (Bensimon, 2007; Murphy, 2016). Administrators and educational

scholars cannot ignore the role of student affairs professionals if institutions of higher education truly wish to respond to students of color who are not only dissatisfied, but have actively voiced their dissatisfaction, with campus environments (Bensimon, 2007). Student affairs professionals play an important role within the institution and the experiences of students (Allen & Cherry, 2003; Eaton, 2016; Poon et al., 2016). Focusing research and scholarship on the role of the professional is a necessary step in influencing the experiences for students of color and working to ensure they have a safe and successful experience and environments (Bensimon, 2007).

In this study, I shared the voices of nine student affairs professionals, eight of which identified as a person of color, and their work with students of color. Sharing personal experiences of student affairs professionals contributed a deeper understanding about how professionals respond to the needs and demands of students of color. The study also incorporated racism and campus environments, noting the experiences of students of color with racism, microaggressions, and oppression. Through a sharing of personal narratives, this study offers an opportunity to consider the influence of professionals and a way to better understand daily work with students of color (Bensimon, 2007). This information can help in the development of strategies and approaches to support students of color adjustment and persistence within and against campus environments that are racist and foster the occurrence of microaggressions (Baker & Robnett, 2012; Bensimon, 2007; Renn & Reason, 2013).

This study also offered the opportunity to more fully understand student affairs practice by connecting theory to the practice and experience of the participants. Theory is both formal and informal in student affairs practice (Boss, Linder, Martin, Dean, & Fitzer, 2018; Love, 2012). Formal theory is most often associated with named models, theorists, and researchers learned in a formal educational setting, whereas informal theory are thoughts, ideas, and

practices that individual professionals carry around in their head and utilize to address situation (Love, 2012; Reason & Kimball, 2012). It is important to learn from observations. A focus on professional narratives provided the opportunity to learn from the experiences of each participant (Love, 2012). Acknowledging the scarce research that identifies where professionals draw knowledge that guides their approach, this study provided strategies that can help other professionals work with students of color (Bensimon, 2007). Emphasizing the role of student affairs professionals is essential. A lack of structural and organizational support can be inhibiting for professionals and continues to preclude theories based upon the professionals' experiences (Bensimon, 2007; Poon et al., 2016).

Study Overview

Guided by a transformative worldview and critical race theory (CRT) as a theoretical framework, I used a narrative inquiry methodology to learn how student affairs professionals work with students of color in their daily practice. Narratives provided first-hand accounts of participants' practice of working with and supporting students of color. Using CRT, I centered race throughout the study, utilizing the five tenets of CRT. With my focus on understanding how student affairs professionals work with students of color in predominantly and historically white institutions, I used CRT to critically questioning the presence of racism within the experiences of each professional, advancing social justice through sharing the lived experiences of each participant (Delgagdo & Stefancic, 2012; Museus, Ravello, & Vega, 2012; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Race was also highlighted through the identities of eight of the participants in their experiences as professionals and people of color.

During two one-to-one interviews, I asked participants to share how they have supported students of color, and how their socialization and preparation influenced their work with

students. Through a semi-structured interview protocol, I asked participants to share their journey to student affairs work, their current role, and how they interact with students of color. I also asked participants to identify an artifact that represented their approach, or experiences providing support to students of color. Participants reviewed transcripts for their first interview and provided responses to initial themes to help me shape their participant portraits, or their narrative. I conducted the study virtually to allow student affairs professionals from a variety of locations to provide their stories of how they approach working with students of color. I sought participation from various levels of practice at different institutional settings to add depth to the experiences and approaches in the study.

Notes About Language

Throughout this study, I used the term campus environments extensively. I used the term to describe an institution's campus, comprised of physical structures and boundaries, the people on campus, their shared beliefs, and the day-to-day actions that take place on campus. The terminology describes the work of both Bronfenbrenner (1994) and Strange and Banning, (2001; 2015) in identifying the campus as an entity that encompasses many environments. I used the term to provide consistency throughout the study and to recognize the complexity of campus environments. I used the term campus environment to acknowledge the interconnected nature of the elements intertwined within campus environments, including the physical, aggregate, organizational, and socially constructed environments.

I also used racism extensively throughout the study. Racism is an ideology used by a dominant group to discriminate other groups based upon racial differences, resulting in dominance and superiority (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). I used racism to specifically name the intentional and unconscious behaviors and individual actions that

take place within campus environments that result in marginalization, discrimination, and harm for students of color (Harper, 2012; Reason & Evans, 2007). Racism provides an important context for the study, naming a condition that is central to the experiences for students of color. By naming racism as a problem for students of color, the study seeks to understand participant's experience as they provide support to this population.

With a focus on racism in this study, I used the terms power and privilege extensively throughout this study. I used the term power to address the complexity of societal structures that foster inequality, racist behavior, and microaggressions (Brookfiled, 2014; Dill & Zambrana, 2009). In this study, I used privilege to describe the advantages that White individuals experience as a result of their race and ethnicity, which provides them with access to information and resources not provided to other racial and ethnic groups. Privilege is the result of one group's dominance over other racial and ethnic groups (Goodman, 2012).

I also used the phrase lived experiences to emphasize the unique perspective that accompany the events each participant shared in this study. Using the phrase lived experience emphasized a personal connection between experiences and the participants; no other individual can have the same experience. With a focus on narratives, each participant retold their story and unique experiences in a way that can help others understand their experiences approaches to working with students of color. In relation to each participant's lived experience, I used the terms story and narrative interchangeably throughout the study. A narrative is a way to make sense of what people experience in their lives, communicating reality through stories (Adams, 2008; Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I utilized the word story to refer both to specific events and the accumulation of many stories each participant shared within their two interviews and participation in this study.

Researcher Positionality

As a qualitative researcher, it is important for me to share my connection to this research and the perspectives I will bring to the study. Race is an important aspect of my identity as a bi-racial individual. My race informs my perspective as a researcher and student affairs professional. I grew up in a small rural community with only a handful of people of color. It was hard to find other people who looked like me. Finding other people of color meant traveling over an hour to nearby cities where my family shopped. Racism and microaggressions shaped my childhood experiences. Because of these experiences, I did not feel that I belonged in many settings. It has been a journey to find the language to describe my socialization and to explain how race and racism have shaped who I am today. I connect to this research on a personal and professional level.

Childhood Experiences

I was not fully conscious of my race as a child. My father is White and my mother is Chinese. Growing up, I knew I was different from other White people, but I didn't know what that difference meant. I have many memories of witnessing my mother experience racism within the town I grew up, but also on our family shopping trips. I observed White people speak to my mother more slowly, or ask her to repeat herself because they could not understand her English. I remember wondering why my mother had to repeat simple statements or ask questions when my father, brother, and I rarely experienced the same treatment. As a child, I did not have the language to articulate what my mother experienced; however, I knew that she was being treated as less than.

Race and racism extended into my childhood educational experiences. As one of the few students of color in my school, I experienced racism and microaggressions through expectations

for my academic performance. My peers viewed me as academically successful, despite my own understanding of the class content, but because of my Asian identity. Throughout my elementary and secondary education, my peers asked me for help with homework questions, and in rare occasions they asked to copy my answers. It was confusing to me why other students could not do their own work and why they often asked me for the answers. My classmates labeled me the smart kid, even when that was not an identity I would have chosen for myself. As I reflect upon these experiences, people's perception of me as the smart kid was a foundational interaction with racism. My childhood experience lingered into my college experiences, surfacing years later in my graduate education and work as a student affairs professional.

Finding Student Affairs Work

Student affairs professionals positively shaped my experiences as a college student. Several student affairs professionals served as my advisors and mentors through my involvement in student government and university committees. It was through my interactions with these individuals that I learned about the possibility of student affairs as a career path. The guidance of my mentors helped me chose to become a student affairs professional pursue a career in higher education. Undoubtedly, interactions with my advisors helped me find student affairs. Without their advice and mentorship, I am unsure of what career path I may have chosen. I relied upon my mentors to process through my experiences as an involved student; they were there when I had questions, or just needed to talk. Their presence helped me develop as a person, but more importantly they helped me to continue through and graduate from college.

Throughout my career in student affairs, I have sought to provide the support and guidance that I received while I was a student. As a student affairs professional who is also a person of color, I want to help deepen the understanding of how to best engage and support

students of color, given the racial climate of higher education today. It is important to recognize my experience in student affairs and to acknowledge the potential bias of my experiences. Throughout the study, I will need to be conscious not to apply my experiences to the experiences of the participants of this study. I approach working with students of color based upon my socialization and experiences. As I seek out the experiences of other professionals, I can share my experiences, but the focus is on the participants.

My Identity(ies)

My experiences as a person and a professional of color navigating campus environments informs my approach to student affairs work. As such, it is important to be aware of how my perspective may influence the progression of this study. I am in a position of privilege because advisors and mentors supported my journey through higher education. Their time and attention provided the social and cultural capital to understand the work of student affairs, to transition into graduate school, and into the field as a professional. I also have been fortunate to support students of color in my work as a student affairs professional. Each of my relationships and my lived experiences form a close and personal connection to this study. Throughout the study, it is important for me to be cognizant of my relationship to the study, questioning how my perspective influences what I what and the way that I ask questions.

I have included my researcher positionality at the onset of this study for several reasons. By stating my positionality as a researcher here, I center the importance of my perspective. As a qualitative researcher, I am the instrument for the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2010). The perspective I bring from my experiences and socialization influenced every aspect of this study, including the words I have typed, the research I reviewed, and the way I carried out the study. I also included my positionality now to serve as a reminder,

to be cognizant of my perspective and the potential for my privilege to influence the study in ways that may limit the depth of understanding provided through the participants.

A Personal Call to Action

I cannot be complicit in fostering racist and oppressive environments. Pursuing a doctoral degree has broadened my perspective around issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion. I know better, and now I must do better. I must put the knowledge from my education into practice, naming racist and oppressive behavior in the support of students of color. Undertaking this study is an opportunity to begin that effort. As a person of color, I have observed and experienced racism. Engaging in research based upon racism is my opportunity to resist against the perpetuation of racist systems and structures. This research is also an opportunity for reflection as a person of color. I pursued this study recognizing a need to be conscientious of my perspectives and biases through naming my experiences, relationship to the study, and my practice as a student affairs educator.

Chapter Summary

Through this chapter, I have introduced my rationale and motivation for this study. I have included an overview to several racialized campus events that were a large impetus for my interest in researching racism and the experiences of student affairs professionals. The racialized events provide context for the statement of the problem and the significance of the research associated with this study. I also shared my personal connections to this topic and my goal for the study, which is to deepen understanding of how student affairs professionals work with students of color through their daily interactions. In Chapter 2, I review relevant literature to provide an understanding of racism and microaggressions with attention focused on how campus environments shape students' experiences. This literature connects each component to develop

understanding about the influence of racism for students' experiences in campus environments. I conclude the chapter with literature focused on the student affairs profession and the socialization and preparation of student affairs professionals. I use the literature of this chapter to connect the work of student affairs professionals to their interactions with students of color.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I explore research and literature to provide a breadth and depth of understanding on how student affairs professionals work with students of color. I begin with a focus on race and racism, progressing to an understanding of microaggressions, and the effect of race on college students. With a focus on racism, I continue my exploration of literature with college environments, campus climate, and the influence of organizational and cultural structures. I use the topics in this chapter to add depth to the ways that students of color experience racism, oppression, and marginalization during their interactions within campus environments, and how student affairs professionals can respond. Finally, I explore and connect literature on student affairs professionals, including their preparation and socialization related to racism, and issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion. As part of this exploration, I focus on the important knowledge and skill areas that guide student affairs practice. I intentionally present literature on racism, microaggressions, and campus environments to segue into an exploration and interrogation of student affairs practice.

Centering Racism

The challenges of racism have not dissipated for people of color, despite some individuals believing in the diminished importance of race (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). Racial inequality pervades the culture of U.S. society, furthering a history of racism that continues to affect the perspectives and realities for people of color (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007). An understanding of racism is important to

recognize how institutions of higher education are, or are not, responding to the needs and demands of students of color. Further, it is important to understand how racism manifests within campus environments, and to know what racism means for students of color. I begin this section by synthesizing literature to describe racism. Next, I delve into race and racism in higher education, to build awareness about the larger influence of racism within the experiences of students of color. Explicitly referencing higher education connects the challenges for students of color at a campus level to the nationwide protests and demands of the last several years through knowledge of how campus environments influence racism (Epstein & Kisska-Schulze, 2016; Rhoads, 2016). I conclude this section by identifying challenges for students of color related to racist campus environments.

What is race, and why is race important? Race is a socially constructed category, created to deliberately differentiate and exclude people of color based upon differences in skin appearance, with the intent of creating social hierarchy and constructing Whiteness as superior to all other races (Cobham & Parker, 2007; Harper, 2012; Johnston, 2014; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Williams & Eberhart, 2008). As a socially constructed category, race marks differences in culture, social order, and identity (Williams & Eberhart, 2008). These differences can be used to further discrimination. Racism has become ingrained within the experiences and socialization of each individual person, creating the perception that different experiences based upon race are normal. A normative perspective of race reproduces authority, and marginalizes people of color not afforded power (Chang, 2007; Johnston-Guerrero, 2016). Many White people use race to support their beliefs, perpetuating racist behavior, microaggressions, and continued acts of racism (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

Racist behaviors and acts, along with microaggressions emphasize power for some individuals, while oppressing others.

Racism

While race is the categorization of individuals based upon skin tone, among other factors, racism embodies behavior. Racism is an ideology, based upon the social categorization of race, where individuals actualize race into discriminatory behavior by focusing upon differences in skin tone (Solórzano, et al., 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Racism provides justification for one group to enact dominance over all others, which advances a belief of superiority. Racism involves intentional and unconscious actions, often blatant, which engender marginalization, discrimination, and inflict harm on people and students of color (Harper, 2012; Reason & Evans, 2007). Power is at the core of racism; racism provides power to White people, something people of color have never possessed (Solórzano, et al., 2000). Some individuals contend racism has diminished, while others insist racism remains ever-present.

Numerous people heralded Barack Obama's election as the 44th President of the United States as the beginning of a post-racial era, where members of society have solved the issues and concerns of racism and segregation (Johnston, 2014; Omi, 2010). Some individuals view Obama's election as a culmination to the Civil Rights era, which occurred over 40 years ago and provided important legislation and progress for equal rights to people of color. While the election was a significant victory, racist behavior continues, and important work remains (Chang, 2007). Rather than addressing discrimination against people of color, acceptance of a post-racial perspective has subverted racial dialogue and promoted a colorblind perspective, where individuals purport not seeing skin color. A colorblind perspective disregards the relevance of race and racism in the lived experiences for people of color, promoting the idea of a post-racial

society where race no longer matters or results in different experiences (Omi, 2010; Reason & Evans, 2007). Utilization of a colorblind approach subtly prevents usage of language that would equip individuals to discuss race and on-going acts of racism in a meaningful way (Park, 2012). The intent of a colorblind approach is to mimic fairness, justice, and equality, but it really whites out difference (Sue, 2004). Choosing not to see color invalidates people of color through a denial of difference. Denying difference makes it normal to ignore skin color without acknowledging or understanding the lived experiences for people of color (Sue, 2004). A colorblind perspective also fails to recognize the connection between the race of an individual and the social conditions that underpin the issue (Dixson, & Rousseau, 2005). Instead of ignoring color, the focus should be on understanding racism.

Racism is complex and layered, enacted through covert, elusive, deliberate actions intended to harm others (SiggleKow, 1991; Sue, 2010b). Where and how racism occurs matters. The focus of racism targets people of color in different ways, resulting in cultural, individual, and institutional racism for students of color. An informed understanding of racism must include an understanding of the varied types of racism. Individual racism occurs through behaviors that disadvantage individuals and groups within a system, based upon their race (Museus & Park, 2015). When a White Christian student harasses a Muslim student for their daily prayer practices or covered dress, they are committing and act of individual racism. Cultural racism refers to any form of racism committed against people of color based upon the assumption of difference, which allows the heritage, values, and beliefs of the dominant culture to receive precedence over others (Museus & Park, 2015; Sue, 2010b). Believing all Asian and Asian American students are quiet, studious, nerdy, or good at math creates a discriminatory perspective based upon their collectivist culture. Cultural racism favors the customs, values, and

beliefs of the dominant group over other groups. Institutional racism occurs through policies, procedures, and practices within an organization that differentiate and subordinate people of color within the institution (Museus & Park, 2015). For example, allowing a White Christian student group to reserve campus event spaces in advance while students of color face difficulty finding adequate space for their events perpetrates institutional racism. Each form of racism promotes continued racial inequality throughout society and societal structures. Racial inequality in health care access, educational opportunity, incarceration rates, and the distribution of people of color in residential communities are just a few of examples of racism in societal structures (Omi, 2010). Understanding the ways racism can affect students of color individual provides information that helps to understand racism at larger levels in higher education.

Race and Racism in Higher Education

Racism and campus environments are inseparable; individuals in the campus community interact with race daily. The influence of racism in higher education is one of considerable debate. While some individuals no longer consider racism to be relevant, acts of racism continue within campus environments (Hurtado, Alvarado, & Guillermo-Wann, 2015; Johnston, 2014; Johnston, Pizzolato, & Kanny, 2015). Can a post-racial society exist when instances of racism continue to occur? Racism on college campuses has not diminished, but rather increased with recent racialized events and protests within campus environments (Boatright-Horowitz, et al., 2012; Dreid & Najmabadi, 2016; Rhoads, 2016). With increased instances of racism, it is important to understand what student affairs professionals are doing to respond.

Racism permeates the organizations and structures of higher education (Harper, 2012; Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). The organizational structures, history, and culture of higher education hide racism, which has allowed racism to persist (Davis & Harris, 2016). Racism has

created long-lasting effects, such as: preservation of White power, limited access for students of color, and prolonging resistance toward racial equality (Hurtado, Miles, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Throughout history, White people have used racism to create separation, a sense of intellectual inferiority, and exclusion between people of color and themselves (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). Predominantly White institutions (PWIs) are an example of exclusion, preventing access to people of color to create a sense of elitism (Gregory, 2000; Strayhorn, 2013; Yosso, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009).

Students of color continue to struggle for equity within higher education through their experiences of harassment and hostile behavior, an indication of the continued effects of racism (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Rhoads, 2016), which warrants asking who is responding to their needs. Students of color experience college in distinctly different ways compared to their White peers. Considered the majority group, White students have power and privilege within campus environments (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Patton, & Wooden, 2009). Consequently, campus physical spaces, relationships, policies, and organizational structures contribute to microaggressions committed against students of color (Museus, et al., 2012; Solórzano, et al., 2000; Strayhorn, 2013; Sue, 2010b). White students do not have to worry about campus police stopping them at night based upon the color of their skin, while peers and campus police question students of color about their presence on campus (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Whereas students of color may struggle to find other students who look similarly, White students can easily find other White students at PWI's. Being with other students who look similar provides students of color with relationships and spaces to escape microaggressions and racial stereotypes (Solórzano, et al., 2000). The ways institutions respond to racism not only matters, but also communicates the importance of diversity for the institution.

Responding to racism and racialized acts in higher education. When a racialized act of violence, or any form of racism, occurs, the institutional response often results in a written policy or the formation of a committee, as opposed to directly speaking about the dynamics of White power and privilege (Cole & Harper, 2016). Student affairs professionals who frequently interact with students of color are often left out of planning any response. Adequately addressing racism requires addressing tension and confronting long-held assumptions about institutional values, ideals, and expectations (Chang, 2007). Truly addressing racism requires administrators to name racism and explore the harmful effects associated with the cumulative effects of racism (Harper, 2012). Student affairs professionals can be an important resource in addressing the needs of students of color, and understanding how racism influences higher education.

Why is it important to understand race and racism in the context of higher education? Members of institutions, including students of color, rarely engage in formal or direct conversations about race or power and privilege (Park, 2012). Insufficient institutional conversations silence racial discourse and prevents dialogue that can help students of color make sense of race within their experiences (Cole & Harper, 2016; Park, 2012). Unfortunately, senior institutional leaders do not always respond to acts of racism. Whether the act is a racial slur written on a restroom stall or a predominantly White organization using racist language on social media, the underlying causes go unexamined. Student affairs professionals have an opportunity to develop and facilitate conversations about race, power, and privilege, and to respond when senior leaders do not respond (Gismondi & Osteen, 2017).

When administrators do respond, they often release written statements, addressing the incident and involved parties, but rarely addressing the systemic causes of racism within the institution (Cole & Harper, 2016). Administrators are hesitant to speak publicly or alter policy to

address these acts (Cole & Harper, 2016; Davis & Harris, 2016; Strayhorn, 2013). Regardless of the depth of response, administrators affect the sense of belonging for students of color and their perceptions about the campus climate (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, Alvarado, & Guillermo-Wann, 2015; Hurtado, Miles, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998; Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim, & Yonai, 2013; Johnston, 2014; Jones & Abes, 2013; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whit, & Associates, 2005; Seidman, 2005; Tinto, 1975). Choosing to ignore acts of racism and racist behaviors leaves students ill-equipped to address racial realities in society, including the pervasiveness of racism or the dominant White perspective (Park, 2012). The advancement of racial equity and supporting students of color requires addressing and understanding the interconnected nature of racism within campus environments (Harper, 2012).

Addressing racism on campus requires more than a campus-wide email. Action must accompany the message, through institutional response protocols and the involvement of students, faculty, and administrators through sustained intentional dialogue about racism within campus environments (Davis & Harris, 2016). Higher education policy has addressed race and racism, but these policies do not respond to the effect of racism on the campus racial climate (Harper, 2012; Hurtado, et. al., 1998). When administrators choose to not address the effects of racism, this choice results in a hands-off attitude that does not adequately or effectively respond to racial issues within campus environments (Cole & Harper, 2016; Davis & Harris, 2016; Hurtado, et al., 1998). Research has not studied what university presidents are saying, or not saying, in response to racial incidents (Cole & Harper, 2016). It is common for administrators' responses to be minimal or lackluster. An opportunity exists to explore institutional response on a deeper level, through daily work of student affairs. The work of student affairs professionals

also presents an opportunity to understand how students of color are supported through instances of racism by individuals whose work focuses on the student experience.

Racism and Experiences for Students of Color

Students of color experience greater racial harassment than their White peers (Boatright-Horowitz, et al., 2012; Diver-Stamens, & Lomascolo, 2001; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Strayhorn, 2013; Sue, 2010a). Greater harassment leads to amplified student perceptions of racist campus environments, and feeling invisible or unacknowledged by the institution, particularly at PWIs (Nadal, et al., 2014; Rankin & Reason, 2005). If administrators know students of color experience greater racial harassment, what are student affairs professionals doing in response? For example, when White students attribute the admission of students of color as a diversity quota, they disregard the academic ability of students of color. A lack of programs and resources, such as a multicultural center or staff and faculty of color, contribute to feelings of invisibility for students of color. Assumptions and stereotypes support a narrative that undermines experiences of students of color. For example, instructors and peers who assume students of color choose less rigorous areas of study for less work or rigor further a stereotype these students come under-performing secondary instructions, and lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Chang, 2007). A racially diverse student body and environments create positive interactions with diversity, positively influencing students' academic and social experiences (Harper, & Hurtado, 2007; Laird & Niskodé-Dossett, 2010; Pascarella, 2006). Administrators cannot ignore the marginalizing effects of race.

Nearly half of all college students who attend or will attend an institution of higher education will not complete their program of study within a six-year time (Museus, 2014), accentuating a need to understand the work of student affairs professionals. The current

generation of college students is the largest and most racially and ethnically diverse, with enrollment increasing for minoritized populations (Renn & Reason, 2013). While students of color are increasing in numbers, racism and assumptions about their capacity to thrive continue to challenge their experiences (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Museus, 2014). Assumptions about students of color, particularly African-American students, furthers a belief that these students are not as capable as White students (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). This perspective keeps students of color from infringing upon the status of White students, furthering oppression and marginalization. Addressing racism for students of color requires knowing what racism looks like in students' experiences.

Racial challenges for students of color. Students of color face challenges with academic persistence, compared to their White peers (Rankin & Reason, 2005). White students often view racism as a social problem of the past, adopting a post-racial or colorblind perspective (Boatright-Horowitz, et al., 2012; Diver-Stamens, & Lomascolo, 2001; Park, 2012; Reason & Evans, 2007). White students also view themselves as victims of reverse racism more often than perceiving students of color as victims of racism (Boatright-Horowitz, et al., 2012). Oppressive and exclusive institutional histories remain intertwined in the fabric of college environments. Students of color, who report greater harassment on campus, are more likely to view the campus climate as racist, to recognize racial tension on campus, and feel invisible and unacknowledged, particularly at PWI's (Boatright-Horowitz, et al., 2012; Diver-Stamens & Lomascolo, 2001; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Nadal, et al., 2014; Rankin, & Reason, 2005). Students of color must be conscious of their race in different ways than their White peers.

Race influences social interactions for students of color through racist behaviors and actions (Chang, 2007; Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Rowan, & Andrews-Guillen, 2003),

which influences how students of different races interact with one another. Within college environments, racial dynamics inform the persistence of students of color. Students' racial perceptions influence their behaviors and attitude; how students perceive race affects how they experience college (Johnston, 2014). For example, students of color are unlikely to utilize certain places on campus used by White students, such as athletic facilities or buildings with a history of excluding students of color (Laird & Niskodé-Dossett, 2010). Students of color are less likely to participate in organizations that promote dominant White perspectives, historically white fraternal organizations being a prime example (Park, 2014). Racism not only affects day-to-day interactions for students, it affects their well-being.

The challenges associated with being a student of color cause a psychological and emotional toll, but institutional administrators rarely consider these costs (Harper, 2012). It is important to recognize that persistence and progression towards attainment of a degree for students of color does not equate to a sense of belonging or sense of community within the institution (Hurtado, Miles, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). While systems of education socialize students to view classrooms as democratic spaces, students of color experience marginalization in classroom spaces (Diver-Stamens & Lomascolo, 2001). Far too often faculty disregard the perspective of students of color. Students of color are labeled as incorrect, because intelligent statements could not come from a student of color who must be socially disadvantaged (Chang, 2007; Solórzano, et al., 2000; Sue,2004). Discounting the perspectives of students of color discourages their continued participation. Students enter college after years of racial socialization, receiving messages that the White perspective is dominant, which poses challenges to their engagement in classroom conversations about race (Park, 2012). Instead of silencing these students, conversations must acknowledge their racialized experiences. In this

section, I have included literature to establish an understanding of race and racism in higher education. Understanding everyday subtle forms of racism is important to fully understand how student affairs professionals can support and work with students of color.

Microaggressions

Race and racism are inseparable in the experiences of students of color. These two constructs shape racial discrimination, but alone do not describe the everyday actions that manifest racism for students of color. Microaggressions are subtle daily forms of racism that take the form of verbal and non-verbal insults, which demonstrate derogatory behavior directed towards students of color (McCabe, 2009; Nadal, et al., 2014; Solórzano, et al., 2000; Sue, 2010a, 2010b), which often go unnoticed. I begin this section with scholarship that deepens understanding about microaggressions. I progress into a clarification about types of microaggressions, accompanied by categories of microaggressions. I conclude this section through an exploration of college students' experiences with microaggressions, specifically the impact of microaggressions on their experiences.

Often considered from the perspective of race, microaggressions also intersect with gender, class, sexuality, and other social identities (Boatright-Horowitz, et al., 2012; Delgagdo & Stefancic, 2012; Huber & Solórzano, 2014; Linder, Harris, Allen, & Hubain, 2015; Nadal, et al., 2014; Solórzano, et al., 2000; Sue, 2010b). Microaggressions communicate hidden messages of hostility toward students of color (Sue, 2010a, 2010b). Over time, the effects of microaggressions accumulate, causing some students of color to feel invisible and distant within campus environments, which affects their self-esteem and academic performance (Harper, 2012; Johnson, 2014; Nadal, et al., 2014; Sue, 2010a, 2010b). While microaggressions are subtle, the recipient experiences long-lasting and cumulative effects, which psychologically and

physiologically tax individuals who are the target of microaggressions (Huber & Solórzano, 2014; Minikel-Lacocque, 2013). Students of color form lasting impressions from experiences with microaggressions in campus environments.

Language is powerful. Language affects the definition of problems, informs solutions, and communicates issues of importance, supported by beliefs and assumptions (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013; Sue, 2010a). The verbal and non-verbal messages received by students of color affect their experience(s). Hearing or seeing racial slurs on campus can cause students of color to feel unwelcome, making it difficult for some students to identify places on campus that feel like home (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzana, 2009). The influence of these messages informs how students of color interact with other individuals and campus environments. Microaggressions and the associated messages offer a framework to explore experiences for students of color and the connection between students' experiences, racism, and microaggressions (Huber & Solórzano, 2014).

Types and Categories of Microaggressions

Racial jokes, insults, and treating people of color as less than members of the dominant group are common forms of microaggressions (Davis & Harris, 2016; McCabe, 2009). Each form of microaggressions seek to deny the influence of racism and the lived experiences for people of color (Davis & Harris, 2016; Huber & Solórzano, 2014; McCabe, 2009; Nadal, et al., 2014; Sue, et al., 2007; Torres-Harding, Andrade, & Romero Diaz, 2012; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). While racial microaggressions are common, other types of microaggression exist, including institutional and environmental microaggressions. In addition to different types of microaggressions, there are also categories of microaggressions. While the type of

microaggressions informs the focus of the subtle act of racism, the category informs the delivery of the microaggressions

Types of Microaggressions. The focus of microaggressions determines the type of microaggression. For example, institutional microaggressions involve the manifestation of marginalization within an institution, such as a college or university (Davis & Harris, 2016; Yosso, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Examples of institutional microaggressions include the structures and practices that lead toward a hostile campus climate for students and people of color (Davis, 2016; Yosso, Ceja, Smith, & Solórzano, 2009). For example, Latino/a students who have grown up in and around a large family may find campus environments to be isolating, with few faculty or staff who look them, or few representations of their culture. Environmental microaggressions, in contrast to institutional microaggressions, involve continued behaviors, perceptions, and actions that affect marginalized groups and individuals, as the result of the environment and its structures (Sue, 2010a). Environmental microaggressions, in academic settings, are layered with racism and racial stereotypes, and can be overt (McCabe, 2009; Nadal, et al.,2014), whereas microaggressions in social spaces can be covert or subtle (Solórzano, et al., 2000). An example of an environmental microaggression would be the omission of White privilege from a curriculum or in-class conversations, representing continued behavior of oppression, a product of environments (Boatright-Horowitz, et al., 2012). Understanding where microaggressions occur deepens an understanding of how microaggressions can occur, which is described by different categories of microaggressions.

Categories of microaggressions. In addition to different types of microaggressions, there are also several categories, that more fully describe the effect and intentionality of microaggressions. Categories of microaggressions describe the delivery of the microaggression

as insults, assaults, or attempts to invalidate a person, including: microinsults, microassaults, and microinvalidations. Microinsults include comments of a rude nature, which are insensitive and focused on demeaning the target of the microinsult. (Sue, et al., 2007; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Sue, 2010a). Statements about an individual's qualifications, or right to participate hide microaggressions. Microassaults advance beyond microinsults, involving explicit and intentional racial attacks; microassaults are the most like old-fashioned racism (Sue et al., 2007; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Sue 2010a). Microinvalidations exclude, negate, or nullify the thoughts, feelings, or lived experience of a person of color (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013; Sue et al., 2007; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Sue, 2010a). Each category targets the lived experiences of people of color, casting doubt and interiority. Each of the categories of microaggression can take many forms including making a student of color feel like an alien; assuming a person of color is a criminal or will commit a crime; denying the existence of individual racism; perpetuating the myth of meritocracy; and assigning people of color second-class status, amongst others (Sue et al., 2007). For students of color, microaggressions take place within, and because of, campus environments.

College Students and Microaggressions

Researchers have spent considerable effort studying how microaggressions influence students of color (McCabe, 2009; Nadal, et al., 2014; Ong et al., 2013; Sue, 2010a, 2010b; Sue & Constantine, 2007; Torres-Harding et al., 2012). The research affirms students of color experience greater harassment and ridicule than White students, causing them to doubt their right to be at the institution (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000). For example, a professor who dismisses the responses of a Black male student and asks them to calm down during an in-class conversation is committing a racial microaggression, subtly communicating a sense of inferiority

based upon the student's racial differences (Sue, 2010b). Racial microaggressions negatively

influence well-being for students of color, causing students to develop mistrust for the institution

and campus environments (Kim, Kendall, & Cheon, 2016). For example, students of color face

an assumption of criminality and hypersurvelliance, with some people perceiving students of

color as more likely to steal based upon skin color (Kim, et al., 2016; Smith, et al., 2007).

Additionally, White people often consider students of color as dangerous or threatening

(McCabe, 2009) which affects how students of color develop relationships with White peers.

Impact of microaggressions on self-esteem, well-being, and adjustment for students

of color. Racial microaggressions adversely impact self-esteem for students of color (Nadal, et

al., 2014). The subtle and direct attacks cause students of color to feel ridiculed and less valued

than their White peers (Solórzano, et al., 2000). Heightened attention and hypersurvelliance by

White people cause students of color to act overly cautious, at times having to explain their

presence or behavior, resulting in racial battle fatigue (Smith, et al., 2007). Continued exposure

to microaggressions increases students' fatigue, reduces self-esteem, and causes students to feel

invisible, more so than overt forms of racism (Sue et al., 2007). Harris' (2017) research on

multiracial students and their experiences revealed that students of color found it difficult to fit in

with other students and viewed a lack of people of color within campus environments as

isolating. Not feeling enough, or a part of the larger student community, creates confusion for

students about who they are and what they think of themselves. Even with defined friend

groups, microaggressions caused students of color to become hesitant within campus

environments and attending cultural events (Harris, 2017; Harwood, Browne Huntt, Mendenhall,

& Lewis, 2012), which increased psychological adjustment issues (Ong, Burrow, Ja, Fuller-

Rowell, & Sue, 2013).

Progressing from feeling isolated to feeling ignored. Experiencing low self-esteem or difficulty with adjusting to campus environments hinders students of color. Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino (2007) conducted a study focused on Asian and Asian American students through which they learned students' feelings of invisibility resulted from a lack of acknowledgment. Students' in the study felt heightened feelings of invisibility when conversations focused on race. The results of Sue et al.'s study affirmed microaggressions affect all people of color, with the effects of microaggressions extending beyond a Black and White paradigm. Minikel-Lacocque (2013) spent 10 months to understand the experiences of students of color, considering the impact of racism and racial microaggressions. Using a cross-case analysis, the study corroborated the influence of microaggressions on students' connection with the institution. Students of color who experience microaggressions feel isolated within campus environments, unwelcome, separated from peers, and in some cases ignored by the institution (McCabe, 2009; Minikel-Lacocque, 2013; Smith, et al., 2007).

Students of color treated as second-class citizens. Greater exposure to microaggressions increased the likelihood of students of color feeling invisible, as less than, or even second to their White peers (Harwood, et al., 2012; Nadal, et al., 2014; Torres-Harding, et al., 2012). Microaggressions ignore the unique and different parts of identity for students of color. The effects of microaggressions are also cumulative (Sue, 2010b), which causes students of color to perceive themselves as less than their peers, and as not belonging within the institution (Sue, et al., 2007). For Asian and Asian American students, experiencing racial microaggressions triggers feeling like foreigners, fueling assumptions about their right to belong (Sue, et al., 2007). As an example, Asian and Asian American students feel like second-class

people when receiving comments about speaking English well, regardless of whether it is their first or second language.

Students of color perceived themselves as outsiders within PWI campus environments and targets of racism, microaggressions, and oppression (McCabe, 2009; Minikel-Lacocque, 2013). When students of color feel like outsiders and protest experiences with racist behavior, a problem exists. The student protests and demonstrations highlighted in Chapter 1 bring awareness to the racism and microaggressions experienced within those campus environments. Understanding the root of the problem necessitates recognizing the elements of campus environments. Knowledge of campus environments lends to a better understanding of how racism informs microaggressions, other racist acts, and the institution.

Campus Environments

Campus environments are more complex than buildings and walkways (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Strange, & Banning, 2001), or locations for protests and demonstrations (Broadhurst & Martin, 2014). Interactions between students and student affairs professionals also take place within campus environments, many of which have a long history of racism (Pratt, 2002). The literature about campus environments, specifically environmental structures and frames, shapes the opportunity to better understand student protests and demonstrations (Gin, Martínez-Alemán, Rowan-Kenyon, & Hottell, 2017; Museus, Yi, & Saelua, 2017; Rhoads, 2016). I begin this section with literature describing the foundations of campus environments, progressing to descriptions of environmental structures and frames. I deliberately include scholarship on these topics to broaden and underscore how campus environments influence students' experiences, and to contextualize the influence of campus environments on individual behaviors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner, 1994). I include a brief synthesis of literature about the organization of

environments to connect campus environments to preceding section on race that I highlighted in Chapter 1 and to connect environments to the work of student affairs professionals. I conclude this section with scholarship about environmental structures (Strange & Banning, 2015) to racism, oppression, and marginalization within campus environments to the experiences of students and the professionals who work with them. In addition to being the place where student affairs professionals conduct their work, campus environments influence how student affairs professionals develop their approaches towards students of color (Strange & Banning, 2015).

Campus environments are distinctive spaces where students spend a significant amount of time, in class or in various spaces like the student union (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Suarez-Balcazar, et al., 2003). Students' perceptions of environments vary by race, their understanding of race, and the institution's culture with students of color viewing campus environments as more oppressive, marginalizing, hostile, foreign, and uncomfortable than White students (Boatright-Horowitz, et al., 2012; Diver-Stamens & Lomascolo, 2001; Iverson & Jaggers, 2015; Laird & Niskodé-Dossett, 2010; Museus, 2015; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Sue, 2010a). While student affairs professionals know students of color face challenges with campus environments, the ways campus staff and administrators support students of color is less well-known (Bensimon, 2007; Luedke, 2017; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Understanding campus environments provides insight into how student affairs professionals can support students of color, by recognizing how environments inform student behavior and campus culture.

Understanding Campus Environments

Campus environments have a profound influence on students' learning, informing students' development, behaviors, and actions (Cox, 2011). Campus environments uniquely integrate a student's social, academic, and professional activities into one place (Hunt &

Eisenberg, 2010), where students develop perceptions and meaning through symbols, messages, and culture, which can result in a cultural conflict for students' identities (Museus, et al., 2012). A student of color who spends most of their time in the multicultural center may place a greater emphasis on their racial identity versus their gender, sexual, or class identities. Institutions that intentionally encourage use of the physical spaces and resources within campus environments can maximize the impact on student success (Kuh, Schuh, Kinzie, Whitt, & Associates, 2005). Next, I present literature that explores the influence campus environments on students' behavior and their sense of belonging.

Environmental influence of students' behavior and sense of belonging. Physical elements of campus environments communicate message to students (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Bronfenbrenner, 2004; Kenney, et al., 2005; Museus & Jayakumar, 2012; Strange & Banning, 2015). Messages from campus environments advise students where to sit, gather, and how to interact within campus spaces (Hurtado, et al., 2012; Laird, & Niskodé-Dossett, 2010; Strange, & Banning, 2015). Students shape their decisions based upon these messages, informing their interactions with campus environments, which create lasting and memorable experiences (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 1994; Kenney, et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Campus environments also influence whether or not students feel connected (Strange & Banning, 2001) to specific places on campus, which fosters a sense of belonging and personal confidence (Fink, 2014; Schlossberg, 1989). For example, students who spend a significant amount of time in the multicultural center may describe the center as their campus home, a place where they feel comfortable. The opposite effect can also occur. Students can also be marginalized and pushed aside when their peers are unaccepting (Schlossberg, 1989). It is important to understand the ways that students of color feel a sense of belonging and connection to the campus.

Environmental Structures

Uri Bronfenbrenner's (1994) research on ecology articulated a model that describes environments and the influence of environments on people. Five sub-systems exist within his model: the microsystem composed of individual activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations; mesosystem, which links process between two or more settings together; the exosystem, connecting the individual to a larger organizational system; the microsystem composed of culture, sub-culture, and knowledge; the chronosytem where change or consistency occurs over time. Known as ecological development, Bronfenbrenner's (1994) model describes the process and conditions that govern human development in physical spaces. An important feature of this model is the notion of progressive human development, which becomes complex over time.

Environments exert the most influence during regular interactions between individuals and an environment, known as proximal process (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Strange & Banning, 2001). Effects of proximal process are more important than the specific environment where the interaction is taking place. Campus environments affect students of color while they engage with campus environments; however, students are not permanent inhabitants of campus environments. Students' experiences carry forward into their post-college experiences, which emphasizes the importance of campus environments in students' experiences. Just as environments influence people, people also influence the environment. Humans have the unique ability to create, tolerate, and adapt to environments, creating meaning and purpose for enviornments (Bonfenbrenner, 1994; Renn & Reason, 2013). Campus structures are a point of influence and it is important for student affair professionals to grasp how campus structures reinforce students' persistence and ultimately degree attainment (Hurtado, et al., 2012).

Interactions with campus environments shape experiences through daily interactions and student outcomes, including sense of belonging (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Renn & Reason, 2013).

Environmental Frames

Strange and Banning (2001; 2015) are well known for their description and interpretation of campus ecology, providing four environmental frames to understand campus environments: the physical environment, human aggregate, organizational environments, and socially constructed environments. Each of the four frames articulated by Strange and Banning provide a depth and complexity about the college environment.

The physical environment. Campus environments exist as both physical and non-physical elements (Kenney, et al., 2005; Strange & Banning, 2001). The physical elements of a campus include the layout of the campus, including walkways, green spaces, and building including the library or residence halls (Strange & Banning, 2001). Elements of the physical environment providing structure to the layout and accessibility of campus, and shaping how students interact with buildings, spaces, and people (Strange & Banning, 2015). Students' interactions with the physical environment directly influence their behavior and experience, including the walkways they use and where they sit, a concept known as architectural determinism (Strange & Banning, 2001). Environmental influence is progressive, a concept known as architectural possibilism, which recognizes many possibilities for campus environments to influence behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Strange & Banning, 2001). For example, students may utilize a well-kept green space as a gathering space, but the space does not direct how students use the space. A third concept articulated by Strange & Banning (2001), architectural probabilism*,* acknowledges students' behaviors as probably linked to aspects of

campus environments. For example, having abundant and comfortable furniture in a student union will probably encourage students to spend more time in that space.

The human aggregate. Individuals are a significant component of the non-physical aspects of campus environments, bringing the campus to life through their characteristics and interactions with the environment (Strange & Banning, 2015). People ascribe meaning to physical elements, preserving and transmitting environments to others through interactions with other individuals and with the physical environment (Strange & Banning, 2001; Strange & Banning, 2015). Environmental differentiation and consistency and person-environment congruence are two important considerations of the human aggregate. Environmental differentiation and consistency focus on differentiation between individuals in the environment, noting similarity and differences (Strange & Banning, 2001). Person-environment congruence results when an individual is the same or nearly the same as other individuals in the dominant group (Strange & Banning, 2001). Who is in the environment at any given time will influence the way the environment appears to individuals and how it affects them.

Student affairs professionals are a component of the human aggregate, who actively diffuse campus environments through their interactions with other individuals, including students (Strange & Banning, 2015). The increasing diversity of students in higher education represents a need for student affairs professionals and other administrators to develop campus environments that enhance the learning experience for all students (Rankin & Reason, 2005). For example, student affairs professionals who host a program in the student center for students create space for those students to be in community with one another, providing support for the student experience (Strange & Banning, 2001). Exploring student affairs work with students of color offers insight into the dynamics of relationships poised to support students' learning (Strange &

Banning, 2015). Studying the interactions between student affairs professionals and students of color can provide information about how the institution shapes the experience(s) for students of color.

Organizational environments. The organizational environment includes the rules that govern the institution, providing structure to the day-to-day operations and activities within campus environments (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Strange & Banning, 2015). Organizational environments operate with varying levels of complexity, formality, stratification, and efficiency (Strange & Banning, 2015). The organizational environment supports and constrains behaviors and experiences. For students of color, the organizational environment includes resources such as identity-based centers, cultural student organizations, or counseling staff assigned to identity-based populations. Organizational environments persist within institutions by supporting positive morale amongst individuals within the environment (Strange & Banning, 2015). Student organizations and freedom of expression policies are additional examples that designate who, what, where, when and how. In addition to detailing how activities take place through policy, the organization environment includes the organizational structure, represented through specific administrators, such as a Dean of Students or a Diversity Office, both of which are relevant to students of color. From the structures and rules that govern environment, people create and derive meaning, fabricating the importance of social norms and customs, or social environments.

Socially constructed environments. The creation and relevance of environments is a social process. Individuals perform behaviors, expectations, and attitudes based upon the push they receive from campus environments (Strange & Banning, 2015). Members of the campus community create a consensus around the characteristics of the environment through cultural

experiences. The socially constructed environment recognizes the role of individuals in shaping their experience and the experience of others. Elements of the socially constructed environment are also a part of the campus culture, reflecting the assumptions and beliefs of members within campus environments (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012). For students of color, the socially constructed environment influences their perception of the institution and their perceived level of comfort. Language and artifacts are two areas contained within the socially constructed environment, including campus symbols and statues. A statue that represent historic institutional figure conveys a culture an exclusionary and racist culture for students of color. What is located within campus environments and the interpretation of those elements socialize students to the perspectives of the institution. To support students of color, educators need thorough knowledge about spaces and places within campus environments.

Organizational Frames and Perspectives

Institutions of higher education are a collection of organizations within a larger organization, supported by a mission, vision, and values that communicate what is important (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Manning, 2013). Organizational theories provide administrators and student affairs professionals with a tool to understand the development of priorities, allocation resources, and institutional values. Institutions are complex with specialized functions, expertise, and competing interests (Birnbaum, 1991; Manning, 2013); it can be hard to make sense of policies, practices, and how students are supported. Higher education institutions are also linked to social issues (Manning, 2013), creating connections with movements like #BlakLivesMatter, and protests and demonstrations by students of color. I briefly describe organizational frames and the political nature of institutions to provide context about how organizational theories influence and inform the work of student affairs professionals.

Framing Organizations

Bolman and Deal (2013) are well-known for their work on organization theory, providing four frames to describe organizations: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. Within each of the four frames, Bolman and Deal (2013) provide a set of ideas or beliefs that help to view an organization from different perspectives, including what is important within each organizational frame, how leadership is exhibited, and how change can occur.

Organizational Frames. As described by Bolman and Deal (2013), the structural frame explores the elements of an organization, recognizing that work is best accomplished within organizations when the decision-making process is rationale. This frame explores the policies and practice that give meaning and purpose to the organization. Much like the foundation of a home, the structural frame provides the support for the organization and the individuals within to function on a day-to-day basis. The human resources frame focuses on the reciprocal relationship between people and organizations. A good fit between individuals and the organization will result in positive benefits and when the fit is poor, both the organization and individuals will suffer (Bolman & Deal, 2013). Under the political frame, organizations are described as interest groups that use values and beliefs to inform decisions and resource allocation (Bolman & Deal, 2013). The last of the four frames, the structural frame recognizes the autonomous nature of the organization and the importance of symbols and messages in conveying information (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

The Political Nature and Complexity of Higher Education Institutions

In addition to the four frames developed by Bolman and Deal (2013), varying perspectives of institutions offer deeper insight. Institutions of higher education are political organizations, with power that is created and maintained through complex and decentralized

processes (Birnbaum, 1991; Weick, 1982). The political nature of institutions often results in

productivity, but results in competing interests. For example, the needs for students and persons

of color may not be prioritized, or those needs may be met suddenly, indirectly, or at the expense

of one group over another (Weick, 1982). Viewing institutions as political relates back to issues

of power and dominance; for a dominant group to remain in power, other groups remain

oppressed, without the ability to access resources to push forward their interests. Political

coordination of the university relies on leaders in the organization to coordinate activities, to set

priorities, which results in greater political involvement (Bolman & Deal, 2013).

Additionally, institutions of higher education are loosely coupled, or organized, with

senior administrators at the top of the organization and many autonomous departments engaging

in activities with little oversight, in particular the faculty (Hearn & McLendon, 2012).

Organizational theories of higher education address dynamic of the intersection of faculty and

administration, but the student experience is often excluded, as is the perspective of student

affairs professionals who interact with students (Bensimon, 2007; Kezar, 2003; Massy, 2016;

Ramsey, 2014). The political nature of institutions also includes a focus on relationships, which

is key to understanding the structure, behavior, and interactions that take place within the campus

environments, including how student affairs professionals engage students of color (Manning,

2013). The political nature of higher education institutions challenges change. Advancing

progress can be difficult without an understanding of the campus culture and climate, that

informs and supports many of actions within institutions, as complex organizations.

Campus Cultures

Campus environments are more complex than people and places; campus environments

also include a distinctive culture. Campus culture includes institutional history, mission,

physical setting, norms and traditions, values, beliefs, and assumptions (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Strange & Banning, 2015). Within this section, I present research and scholarship to build awareness of campus culture, including climate to connect the nuanced aspects of culture to the experiences of students within campus environments, and the professionals who work with them. I also discuss campus racial climate and culture to connect race and racism. I conclude this section with by connecting campus culture to the experiences of students of color through involvement and persistence. Knowledge of the campus racial climate is an important area of focus for student affairs professionals, to understand how students are affected.

Campus Culture

Institutional commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion is an important component of the campus culture (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012).   A commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), or lack thereof, communicates level of dedication to students from university administrators and other members of the institutional community. The recruitment of students, availability of identity-related spaces, and faculty and staff who resemble students of color are all aspects influenced by an institution's commitment to EDI. Campus culture shapes learning environments through individuals, connecting institutional history and tradition (Guiffrida, Marquez Kyama, Waterman, & Museus, 2012; Jayakumar & Museus, 2012). Examples of campus culture include practices like dressing up for football games and addressing, or not addressing, racial incidents. It is critical for student affairs professionals to consider campus culture and understand how parts of the institutional culture inform experiences and support for students of color (Museus, et al., 2012; Strange & Banning, 2015). The collective pattern of tacit values and beliefs that are a part of the campus culture underpin the perception of racism, or the campus racial culture (Museus, et al., 2012).   Campus racial culture is a result of time, largely

produced by White people who have the dominant perspective within the institution. Unfortunately, White people do not often reflect upon their privilege or dominance, which continues a history of exclusion for students of color (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Museus, et al., 2012). Unsupportive campus cultures cause subcultures to develop. Subcultures are distinct, created and perpetuated with a set of distinct values, assumptions, and perspectives that individuals transmit to others who join in, providing space that differs from the dominant culture (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012). Students of color develop subcultures in response to the campus climate. Students develop subcultures in both physical and non-physical forms, including meeting during at specific times in the student union and using a social media hashtag to communicate with each other.

Campus Climate

Campus climate refers to the overall character of a institution, facilitated through an individual's sense of safety, belonging, and engagement with campus environments (Renn & Reason, 2013). Like campus culture, campus climate also includes perceptions, attitudes, and expectations, which define the institution (Gregory, 2000; Jayakumar & Museus, 2012). Derived from individual perspectives, campus climate is a concept that is felt through interactions with campus environments (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Renn & Reason, 2013). As a result, students of color commonly encounter racial prejudice and discrimination. The formation of campus climate takes place over time through structural diversity, a historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion, psychological climate, and social interaction between individual within the campus community (Hurtado, et al., 1998; McCabe, 2009; Renn & Reason, 2013). Knowledge of campus climate provides perspective and understanding about the influence of campus environments for students of color (Museus, Ravello, & Vega, 2012; Solórzano, et al., 2000;

Strange & Banning, 2015; Strayhorn, 2013; Sue, 2010b). Race is an inseparable component of

the campus culture, which contextualizes racism as a part of the institution.

  The campus racial climate. Campus racial climate extends the characteristics of

campus climate, representing cumulative effects of racial discrimination, stereotypes, and

prejudice within campus environments (Johnson, et al., 2013; Solórzano, et al., 2000). Racist

behaviors and actions amplify hostile climates. Hostile climates challenge the adjustment of

students of color into college life (Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008). As a result,

students of color often experience a decreased sense of belonging, and feel disconnected.

Students of color who feel disconnected are more likely to experience exclusion, manifested

through physical structures, traditions, language, and symbols (Museus, et al., 2012; Museus,

Sarinana, & Ryan, 2015). Individual perceptions of the campus racial climate include prejudice

and discrimination for students of color, which affects their interactions within campus

environments, success, and their continued persistence, or departure, particularly at a PWI

(Johnson, et al., 2013; Museus, 2014; Strayhorn, 2013). Campus racial climate is a key

component of the experiences of students of color.

  The campus climate and racial climate directly influences students' sense of belonging

(Hurtado, et al., 2012; Museus, Lambe Sarinana, Kawamata, 2015). A negative racial climate

with negative race-based experiences can preclude students of color from developing friendships

or persisting (Museus, 2014). Educational structures and social interactions socialize individuals

to perceive the institution through a racialized lens, differentiating other people based upon their

race (Boatright-Horowitz, et al., 2012). While in college, students undergo a process of

socialization and re-socialization (Hurtado, et al., 2012), which informs students' perceptions

about their racial and other social identities. This process of socialization occurs through their

acquisition of knowledge in and out of the classroom, through interactions with peers, and through a connection, or lack thereof, to the institution. For example, if a student grew up in an environment where they witnessed oppression and marginalization frequently, they may perceive these behaviors and actions as natural (hooks, 1994). For students of color, a negative campus climate can result in negative experiences, which continues a negative socialization filled with marginalization, and oppression.

Students of Color and the Campus (Racial) Climate

The campus racial climate is challenging for students of color. As students of color seek to develop a connection to the institution through peers and out of the classroom activities, they must confront racial discrimination, stereotypes, and perceived prejudice (Johnson, et al., 2013; Maramba & Museus, 2013). Campus climate and campus racial climate bring campus culture to life. It is through campus climate where students develop a sense of feeling included or excluded within campus environments (Maramba & Museus, 2013). Understanding the influence of the campus racial climate is an area for greater focus by student affairs professionals. For example, students of color who perceive the campus racial climate as negative can feel unwelcome, and sometimes invisible. Students of color also experience greater harassment, compared to their White peers, which causes students to perceive the campus racial climate negatively (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Student's perceptions stem from experiences with hostile attitudes, harassment, microaggressions, and instances when White individuals view students of color as less academically qualified (Cress, 2007). Collectively, negative experiences diminish students' sense of visibility in campus environments and feeling acknowledged by others.

Students develop feelings of invisibility when a campus climate does not acknowledge their culture. For example, it is common for Asian American students to not be considers a real

minority (Museus & Kiang, 2009). Other students of color describe campus climates as racist,

hostile, and disrespectful, whereas White students describe the climate as friendly,

respectful, nonracist (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Examples of hostile climates include racial slurs,

feelings of discomfort participating in class discussions, and feeling uncomfortable engaging

with students from different racial backgrounds (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, &

Hagedorn, 1999; Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim, & Yonai, 2013). Negative racial climates

cause students of color to experience increased academic related stress and discomfort with

campus environments (Johnson, et al., 2013), which greatly challenges students' persistence.

Students' perception of the campus climate directly affects their comfort and their ability to

navigate academic and social experiences (Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim & Yonai, 2013).

Every facet of the institution influences the campus climate and racial climate, including where

and how students of color become involved.

Campus climate and involvement for students of color. The campus climate brings

campus culture to life. The campus climate and the racial climate provide vital information to

students about where and with whom they spend their time. Student organizations composed of

predominantly White members may communicate an unwelcoming message to students of color,

steering them away from involvement opportunities. The campus climate also influences

whether students feel comfortable being on campus and how they become involved (Gregory,

2000; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, et al., 1998). Opportunities that allow students of color

and White students to interact with one another are crucial in shaping positive campus racial

climates (Chang, 2007; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Organizations composed of predominantly

White students can have a negative effect on students of color (Park, 2014). For example, a

fraternity or sorority composed of predominantly White members looks inaccessible to students

of color. Involvement plays an important role in student retention and persistence (Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Access to activities and friend groups are necessary to help students feel they have the right to be at the institution.

  Influencing sense of belonging for students of color. Students who develop a sense of belonging also develop a connection to the institution (Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008). Relationships with peers and the institution affirm the investment of students' time. For students of color, a sense of belonging is quite important. When students of color experience belonging, they reduce negative perceptions about the racial climate and campus environments (Locks et al., 2008). For example, a Latino/a student who becomes involved with student organizations that celebrate and acknowledge their Latin culture more easily establish community and relationships. Students who believe their culture is recognized by the institution are more likely to become involved, and have a positive perception of the climate (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Conversely, a lack of institutional recognition for students' culture results in a decreased sense of belonging (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Locks, et al., 2008). For example, Black students have reported lower levels of satisfaction with the climate whey they experience different treatment than their White peers in academic and social situations (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Students who have less than satisfactory experiences need more attention. Are there opportunities to connect with students of similar interest? Without a connection to the institution, students of color risk isolation, alienation, and subjection to stereotypes (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Feeling isolated and alienated negatively affects students' well-being.

  Students who experience isolation and racial discrimination from the campus climate experience a reduction in their mental health and well-being (Johnson & Yeung, 2014). With a focus on Asian American students in their study, Johnson and Yeung (2014) noted that students

experienced greater racial discrimination and bias after exposure to a racially biasing incident. For example, an Asian American student who receives a compliment from a peer or faculty about their ability to speak English well is more likely to experience or at least be aware of other racially discriminating experiences. While negative experiences influenced students of color, positive experiences did as well. Positive interactions with other diverse peers result in greater connections to fellow students and the institution, fostering a sense of belonging (Locks, et al., 2008). The goal for a student is to become integrated into the college environment and attached to the institution (Museus, et al., 2008), which aids in their progression towards completion of their degree.

   Understanding challenges to persistence. Hostile and negative campus climates hinder students' academic progress, increasing stress for students of color (Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim, & Yonai, 2013), which influences their decision to remain within the institution, causing diminished institutional connection, and occasionally institution drop-out (Cabrera, et al., 1999; Locks et al., 2008). For example, Asian American students commonly experience prejudice through the model minority myth, increasing pressure to be academic achievers, (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000). Examining the effects of stress and campus climate on persistence, Johnson, et al.'s (2013) research reinforced the notion students of color are burdened by racism at PWI's. Rankin and Reason's (2005) focus on students' perceptions about climate revealed 49% of students of color, in their study, observed hostile or offensive behavior within the environment, compared to 39% for White students. The findings pointed to the cumulative effects of the racial climate as influencing decisions about persistence for students of color (Johnson, et al., 2013). Student affairs professionals have an important role in fostering student persistence. The daily interactions between professionals and students of color provide support

to students while challenging the institutional culture to be more supportive (Allen & Cherry, 2003). Through the preceding literature, I have shared how racism influences experiences for students of color. To understand how to affect appropriately and effectively respond to the needs of students, I shift attention to campus professionals focused on the student experience, student affairs professionals.

Student Affairs Professionals and Student Affairs Work

The field of student affairs emerged in higher education to focus on students, providing support during students' college experiences (American Council on Education, 1937; Caple, 1998; Gerda, 2006). Student affairs work has since grown in complexity, driven by an increasing diversity of students in higher education (Barham & Scott, 2006; Bresciani, 2006; Sediman, 2005). In this section, I highlighted research and scholarship to frame the student affairs profession and how individuals discover the field. After including literature about student affairs, I synthesized information about the preparation and socialization of student affairs professionals, focusing on their socialization to diversity. I also briefly explored literature on theory and competency in student affairs, which includes faculty and senior student affairs officers' perceptions about the requisite knowledge for professionals. I conclude the section with scholarship to clarify how student affairs professionals can support students of color through their work and daily interactions.

Increased diversity in student populations has provided an opportunity to investigate how student affairs professionals work with students of color (Chang, 2007; Gusa, 2010; Harper, 2012; Hurtado, Alvarado, & Guillermo-Wann, 2015; Johnston, 2014; Nadal, et al., 2014; Seidman, 2005). Previous research about student affairs professionals has focused on their graduate education and professional practice (Burkard, Cole, Ott, & Stoflet, 2005; Dickerson et

al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein, Riefler, & Mrowka, 2013; Perez, 2016; Reynolds & Altabef, 2015), including advising skills, knowledge of student development, and fiscal management, among others. Exploring the preparation and socialization of student affairs professionals to social justice and diversity provides a better understanding about the ability of these educators to support students of color within campus environments.

Professionals are rarely the focus of research, change, or intervention (Bensimon, 2007), which leaves ample opportunity to better understand everyday student affairs practice. Student affairs professionals are a critical resource for marginalized communities and students of color, with the ability to transmit knowledge and resources while influencing other colleagues and the organizational culture (Allen & Cherry, 2003; Bensimon, 2007). While student affairs professionals provide direct support for students, little is known about their daily interactions with students of color (Luedke, 2017). Previous research has largely focused on competencies for new student affairs professionals. Mid and senior level student affairs professionals expect new professionals to be adept at interacting with college students, while also understanding diverse populations (Burkard et al., 2005; Herdlein, 2004). When scholars do include the voice of student affairs professionals, it focuses on their transition from a graduate program into practice, rather than their socialization (Perez, 2016). The focus of scholarship needs to shift towards the daily work of professionals, where opportunities exist to engage students in dialogue about the effects of racism and oppression (Keeling, 2004). How can student affairs professionals receive preparation that encourages students to engage and confront racism within?

Preparation for Student Affairs Work

Many individuals choose student affairs work based upon their positive undergraduate experiences and guidance of mentors (Linder & Winston Simmons, 2015). However, graduate

education in a higher education and student affairs (HESA) program attempts to provide student affairs professionals with the knowledge and skill needed to work in student affairs (Burkard, et al., 2005; Herdlein, 2004; Perez, 2016). Student affairs professionals often enroll in a HESA programs to prepare for student affairs professionals, which warrants a closer inspection of the knowledge and skills professionals acquire through their graduate program(s), particularly student affairs graduate programs.

The degree to which graduate preparation programs provide student affairs professionals with the necessary general knowledge and skills, remains a point of contention (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, & Molina, 2009). Chief Student Affairs Officers (CSAOs) and faculty in graduate preparation programs focus on different skills for new professionals (Dickerson, et al., 2011; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). CSAOs rated two over-arching areas as important for new professionals: personal qualities and human relation skills (Burkard, et al., 2004; Herdlein, 2004). Specific skills included flexibility, relating well to others, managing time, thinking creatively, and advising students. Faculty emphasized knowledge of theories, critical thinking abilities, and a focus on self-reflection (Dickerson et al., 2011). The curricula in HESA programs expose student affairs professionals to relevant knowledge and ways to approach student affairs work.

Professional Socialization to Student Affairs Work

Reviewing literature on the socialization of new student affairs professionals provides understanding about how individuals enter student affairs and how they learn acquire and awareness of student affairs work (Collins, 2009). Socialization into the student affairs profession is both an individual and institutional effort. For example, socialization helps professionals articulate their professionals, which may include a student-centered focus.

Institutional socialization introduces professionals to values and norms of the institution. Collins (2009) described socialization as the process whereby student affairs professionals enter the profession. Through socialization individuals develop their identity and self-definition while also learning the values of the profession and their institution (Collins, 2009). A limited body of research exists about the socialization of student affairs professionals, with the focus of socialization generally focusing on the curriculum (Perez, 2016).

Graduate education in a HESA program is a significant part of the socialization process for many professionals. Peers, faculty, and other professionals socialize student affairs professionals to the profession through curricula (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Perez, 2016), and interpersonal interactions. For example, a HESA program with a strong student development focus will socialize professionals to student development theories, whereas a program focused on administration may include coursework on budgeting and human resources. HESA programs also socialize professionals through self-reflection. For some professionals their graduate experience is the first experience reflecting about their social identities during their graduate program. Curricula in graduate preparation programs indoctrinate student affairs professionals through their interactions with their program, introducing the philosophy of the profession, while also receiving knowledge and important skills to guide their practice (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009). For example, HESA programs introduce professionals to professional association competencies, and knowledge of social justice. Even if student affairs professionals aspire to champion equity, diversity, and inclusion, they must still recognize their socialization process and the bias and assumptions they bring to their professional practice.

Socialization of student affairs professionals to diversity and social justice. The increasing diversity of students has compelled student affairs professionals to be knowledgeable about issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) (Flowers, 2003). Student affairs graduate programs are a prime opportunity for student affairs professionals to acquire needed knowledge and skills to support students of color. Diversity needs to be an integral component of HESA program to prepare individuals for student affairs practice to work with diverse populations (Gayles & Kelly, 2007). The need for exposure and education about EDI has resulted in inclusion of EDI related topics to curricula in many HESA programs.

Many HESA graduate programs require students to complete a diversity course (Flowers, 2003). While student affairs professionals receive exposure to equity and social justice through this requirement, it by no means ensures their ability or interest in addressing these topics in practice. An overwhelming majority of HESA programs, 74% or 39 programs, required a diverse course; however, most of these programs required only one course (Flowers, 2003). One course is by no means sufficient. In a study of 131 students assessing multicultural experiences and competency in HESA programs, King and Howard-Hamilton (2003) found that current and former HESA students wanted more exposure and experience with EDI during their graduate program. Students in the study also felt uncomfortable bringing up EDI related topics during in-class discussions, this was especially for White identifying students in the study (King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Issues of power and privilege are complex matters and represents a small portion of the array of EDI related issues, fueling the need for more attention in HESA programs (Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Kelley & Gayles, 2010). If graduate programs are a primary mechanism to learn about EDI, what are professionals learning that shapes their student affairs practice?

Diversity courses in HESA programs generally focus on development of multicultural or cross-cultural competency, which focuses on an individual's awareness or openness to learning about difference, attainment of knowledge and information about EDI, and application through their capacity to work well with others (Flowers, 2003; Gayles & Kelly, 2007). Student affairs professionals' understanding of racism connects to their development of multicultural competence (Mueller & Pope, 2001) and their ability to engage students of color. The inclusion of coursework with an EDI focus provides student affairs professionals with knowledge that can guide their interactions with students of color, particularly students who experience racism or hostile campus climates. Coursework provides student affairs professionals with theory, but it does not always translate into practice and work with students of color.

Understanding how student affairs professionals connect theory to practice. The connection between theory and practice is a focus for many HESA programs (Boss, et al., 2018). Having knowledge about the topic does not always equip student affairs professionals to respond to the situation in their work. For example, student affairs professionals rate multicultural development as an important area of knowledge that they gained through their student affairs preparation program (Cuyjet, et al., 2009), but there is little focus on how well that knowledge is implemented. Recent graduates considered themselves to be well-prepared in multicultural foundations and student development (Herdlein, Riefle, & Mrowka, 2013); however, both graduates and more seasoned professionals rated their multicultural awareness higher than their multicultural knowledge (King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003). Professionals' self-proclaimed ability communicates confidence about their awareness, but it does not provide specific detail about the depth of their knowledge with EDI, or how they increase their knowledge through their practice. The terminology is also vague. Instead of using more specific terms, such as EDI,

multiculturalism continues to lump these areas together. The degree to which race, racism,

critical race theory, and social justice, among other EDI topics, inform practice is unclear.

Required coursework is not the solution to this challenge, but it does provide exposure for

professionals. Without required coursework on diversity, professionals must learn through out of

the classroom experiences, which creates difficulty in applying EDI knowledge into practice

(Gayles & Kelly, 2007). The knowledge and awareness obtained through graduate preparation

and practice is inconsistent; awareness is a basic skill, but knowledge takes time to acquire

(Kelley & Gayles, 2010). Understanding how student affairs professionals work with students of

color, in practice, can inform what knowledge professionals need in their graduate preparation.

This understanding informs how theory informally and formally informs practice, including how

professionals access theory and how self-reflect informs the use of theory (Boss, Linder, Martin,

Dean, & Fitzer, 2018; Love, 2012).

   Professional competencies for student affairs. In 2010, the student affairs professional

associations, ACPA and NASPA released *Professional Competency Areas for Student Affairs*

Practitioners, which synthesized important knowledge, skills, and ability areas into

ten competencies: assessment, evaluation, and research; equity, diversity, and inclusion; ethical

professional practice; history, philosophy, and values; human and organizational resources; law,

policy, and governance; leadership; personal foundations; and student learning and development

(Eaton, 2016). Competencies guide professional practice in student affairs through a deeper

understanding of student affairs. Both associations revised the competencies in 2015, to include

personal and ethical foundations; values, philosophy, and history; assessment evaluation, and

research; law, policy, and governance; organizational and human resources; leadership; social

justice; student learning and development; technology; and advising and supporting (ACPA &

NASPA, 2015). The competency areas provide a foundation to explore student affairs practice, particularly as it relates to supporting students of color.

Discrepancies exist between the competencies and the practice of student affairs professionals. While senior student affairs officers and student affairs graduate faculty perceived diversity and social justice to be important, preparation lacked in both areas for new professionals (Cuyjet, et al., 2009; Dickerson, et al., 2011). Out of the group of senior student affairs officers and faculty, 95% agreed diversity related issues were an important knowledge area and 84.5% of those same individuals agreed social justice to be important; however, only 69.7% and 65.5%, of respondents believed they possessed competency in diversity and social justice, respectively (Dickerson, et al., 2011). Professional competencies are a starting place to explore student affairs work with students of color, but are not sufficient.

Student Affairs Practice

Student affairs is young profession, relative to higher education (Manning, Kenzie, & Schuh, 2015). The life-span of a student affairs professional is also short. Within five years, 50-60% of student affairs professionals leave the field of student affairs (Dickerson, et al., 2011). The high turnover for student affairs professionals is troubling. Institutions cannot adequately support students of color when so many professionals leave the field early on in their career, especially professional of color. For some, leaving the field is the result of not being able to find a balance between work and home-life (Guthrie, Woods, Cusker, & Gregory, 2005), feeling burdened working late hours, additional responsibilities, or the increasing needs of students. Additionally, defining requirements for student affairs practice remains vague and differs depending upon institutional context and preparation. Manning, Kinzie, & Schuh (2015) use two over-arching models define student affairs practice: traditional and innovative. The two models

present two distinct perspectives, maintaining what tradition and engaging a wiliness to do things differently. Within traditional models of student affairs practice, student affairs professionals focus on out-of-the-classroom experiences, administration, and learning (Manning et al., 2015). For example, student affairs practice in a traditional model would offer programs and services such as student organizations and leadership programs. These programs include learning outcomes, but lack formal connection to students' academic experiences, curriculum, or faculty. Innovative models of student affair practice are student-centered and work to integrate all aspects of campus environments into a holistic experience (Manning et al., 2015). Student affairs practice in an innovative model connect programs to students' residential environment, with a live-in faculty in residence, and connection to specific courses. Additionally, innovative models seek out partnerships with faculty and the institution at large, to foster student engagement and career preparation through a social justice framework.

Supporting social justice and students in campus environments. A commitment to social justice is becoming commonplace in student affairs, but rarely does practice embrace perspectives that best support students of color (Poon et al., 2016). Student enrollment continues to be more diverse, with a greater focus on EDI and preparing students for a global society; however, a resurgence of racial segregation on college campuses and within campus environments has created many challenges for students and people of color (Jayakumar, 2008). It is a responsibility of campus administrators, educators, and community members to understand and actualize multicultural competence through knowledge, skills, and awareness (Howard-Hamilton, Cuyjet, & Cooper, 2016). Institutions of higher education must support the complexity of students' social identities.

Campus environments have an important role in student affairs practice. Student affairs professionals must become adept at recognizing and naming the presence of White privilege while critically questioning the messages received by students of color within campus environments (Linder, 2016). This not only helps students of color, but also helps White students in shaping more inclusive environments. Campus environments are more than sites of racist experiences; through individuals' interactions, campus environments are active, shaping perceptions and contributing to the determination of what and who is valued. For example, ensuring that all students can participate in student activities regardless of socioeconomic status is one-way student affairs professionals can shape the environments through engagement and support of students of color. Students' learning and campus environments are intimately linked, which is a product of the campus climate (Hurtado, et al., 2012). Responding to the needs of students of color requires more than awareness. Student affairs professionals must do more than provide cultural events or diversity dialogues, they must influence behavior and acknowledge students' identities (Renn & Reason, 2013). With this knowledge of student affairs and the preparation of student affairs professional, attention can pivot to understanding how student affairs professionals support students of color through their work.

Student Affairs Professionals Support of Students of Color

Experiencing racial discrimination within campus environments can cause students of color to doubt their place within the institution, and in some cases, results in feeling second to their White peers, as not (Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, & Sriken, 2014). Social support is necessary for students of color to develop important and sustaining relationships throughout campus environments (Baker & Robnett, 2012). Students of color also experience minoritization and tokenization in academic and social settings (Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim, & Yonai, 2013;

Park, 2009). Having a social support system can ease students through these experiences.

Creating support for students of color is a product of individual(s) and the environment (Renn &

Reason, 2013). For example, the presence of a multicultural center on campus does not

automatically support students of color. The addition of staff within the center who interact with

students of color, affirming students' identities and developing relationships allow support to

occur. Student affairs professionals can provide necessary support. Recognizing students need

for support, student affairs professionals should question how they can be a part of that system.

Acknowledging the culture capital of students of color. Student affairs professionals

can support students of color by acknowledging their lived experiences. Throughout the history

of higher education, people with power excluded students of color from higher education,

perceiving people of color as deficient of the proper social or cultural capital, which created a

deficit perspective (Capple, 1998; Bourdieu, 1986). Rather than focusing on what students of

color do not have, administrators must acknowledge students' unique attributes and their lived

experiences, or capital (Yosso, 2005). Students' attributes can include linguistic capital in

communicating other languages or familial capital experienced through close relationships to

family members. The ability to navigate new environments is also a source of capital.

Community cultural wealth celebrates various forms of capital that stem from family

relationships, knowledge of different languages, the ability to navigate environments, and the

resistance of oppression (Yosso, 2005). Privileged individuals believe people of color, who were

not born with knowledge or value, can overcome barriers through social mobility and education

(Bourdieu, 1986; Yosso, 2005). This by-the-boot-straps mentality does not acknowledge the

lived experiences and perceives an equal opportunity for everyone. A focus on community

cultural wealth acknowledges the richness of a diverse campus community, found in sub-cultures

of the institution. Acknowledging a student's experiences and background is one way to provide support; the relationships that exist between professionals and students of color is another form of support.

Understanding the relationships between students of color and staff. Student affairs professionals can respond to students of color through positive relationships. Students of color who develop relationships with staff, particularly staff of color, increase their capital and develop a sense of mattering through their experiences (Luedke, 2017). Relationships with staff of color mitigate pressure for students of color to hide aspects of their identity or present themselves in ways that others would consider more acceptable. Interactions with staff and staff of color provide students of color with access mentoring relationships, where staff acknowledge their identities and experiences. Students of color described staff of color as valuing their capital, lived experiences, and acknowledging all aspects of their identity (Luedke, 2017). Supportive relationships encourage students of color. While Luedke's (2017) research revealed that students of color did not find similar connections with White staff, students did perceive relationships with staff of color as authentic and supportive. Clearly, race matters for students of color. Knowledge about student affairs professionals' daily interactions with students of color is needed to more fully understand how to best support them.

Chapter Summary

Grounded by the literature presented above, this study utilized the narratives of student affairs professionals to understand the ways they support students of color within campus environments. Race and campus environments provide important context for understanding the support provided to students of color by student affairs professionals. Familiarity with the research on race, campus environments, organizational structures, and student affairs practice

provides context for exploring student affairs practice. The perspective provided through the literature offers insight into how student affairs professionals understand their professional practice and the approaches they utilize to support students of color. In Chapter 3, I describe the plan I used for this study, including guiding frameworks, intended participants, and how I collected and analyzed data.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Human experiences are a powerful mechanism for learning and deeper understanding. The re-telling of individual experiences creates meaning that informs the creation and dissemination of knowledge, as a form of social action (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). Narrative inquiry, as a form of qualitative research, allows researchers to deeply examine the lived experiences of individuals, through a process of storytelling and inquiry to develop questions that will lead participants to create a story of their experiences, providing awareness to other individuals (Crotty, 1998; Johnson & Christensen, 2013; Merriam, & Tisdell, 2016). The meaning behind lived experiences and personal stories are both valued in qualitative research, providing an opportunity to use personal narratives to highlight issues and perspectives that White people historically push aside (Delgado, 1989). Qualitative research uncovers the meaning behind events and experiences, sharing how individuals create their perspectives (Merriam, & Tisdell, 2016). In this chapter, I present scholarship that guides my practice as a qualitative researcher, and that guided this study.

As student affairs professionals progress through graduate preparation and full-time experiences, they have opportunities to connect theory to practice, and to develop techniques to support students of color (Love, 2012; Patton, McEwen, Rendon, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). Professional associations in student affairs highlight diversity and inclusion as important areas of competence, but understanding how individuals implement these areas in practice is not as well documented (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Eaton, 2016). The purpose of this study was to explore

the work of student affairs professionals and their perspectives about working with students of color. Utilizing narrative inquiry, I sought to understand participants' experiences working with students of color, focusing on their preparation and socialization to the field of student affairs. A deeper understanding of how student affairs professionals work with students of color provided useful perspective that can address systemic and oppressive structures of racism, oppression, and marginalization. Narrative inquiry provided first-hand accounts in exploring the following research question(s):

1. In what ways do student affairs professionals work with students of color within campus environments at predominantly and historically white institutions?

2. What informs student affairs educators' approaches to working with students of color within campus environments?

A Transformative Perspective

I approached this study from the perspective of the transformative paradigm. As a set of related and interconnected assumptions and beliefs, the transformative paradigm influences the way that I approached the design and facilitation of this study (Jones, et al., 2014). The axiology, or the role of values, in the transformative paradigm and my approach to research emphasizes human rights and social justice; the goal of research undertaken from this worldview is to provide equity in representing individuals from marginalized communities (Johnson & Christensen, 2013; Mertens, 2010). Ontologically, under the transformative paradigm, the nature of knowledge or study of reality values the difference and uniqueness of experience; however, recognizing different experiences as equally legitimate does not acknowledge the privileges that would otherwise prioritize one person's perspective over others (Crotty, 1998; Johnson & Christensen, 2013; Mertens, 2010; Schwandt, 2007). Each individual's lived experience is

valuable, but not all perspectives are provided with the same level of attention. The transformative paradigm emphasizes the voice of participants within the research process and importantly, this paradigm seeks to push forward social change through confronting systems of oppression (Mertens, 2010). Epistemologically, I study and explore knowledge through placing value on the lived experiences of individuals; I recognized and was critical of how power, oppression, and marginalization influence experiences, so I used knowledge gained from this research to engage in important and critical dialogue to support the promotion of equity, diversity, and inclusion (Crotty, 1998; Johnson & Christensen, 2013; Mertens, 2010; Schwandt, 2007; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). My choice of paradigm influences the set of assumptions that I brought into the process, which created important considerations for the focus of this study, participants, and those who may read this work (Jones, et al., 2014).

Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory emerged during the 1970's as a response to racial injustice during the Civil Rights movement to acknowledge the continued struggle for equality (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Museus, Ravello, & Vega, 2012). Lawyers, activists, and legal scholars developed CRT to more hastily push forward equality, which they considered to be advancing too slowly (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT is a collection of theories, concepts, ideals, and the culmination of events (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Museus, et al., 2012). Five tenets underpin CRT and its application: 1) the centrality of race, 2) a challenge to dominant ideology, 3) commitment to social justice and social transformation, 4) centering the knowledge of experience through counter-storytelling, and 5) a transdisciplinary perspective (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Together, the five tenets focus on the ways race shapes structures, dialogue,

policy and practice from the perspective of marginalized individuals and mandates social activism (Museus, et al., 2012; Yosso, et al., 2009).

CRT is a collection of theories based upon legal reasoning, precedent, and the advancing a fair and equitable decision-making process for all individuals (Delgagdo & Stefancic, 2012; Museus, et al., 2012; Solórzano, et al., 2000). Using CRT, I engaged in a critically questioning about race and equality within this study, highlighting race as I sought to understand how student affairs professionals work with students of color. People of color have historically been denied the opportunity and language to discuss their experiences (Museus, et al., 2012). Using CRT, I prioritized participation for people of color in the study so they could express their stories and lived experiences of race and racism to counter the narratives of dominant individuals and groups (Dixson, & Rousseau, 2005; Museus, et al., 2012; Solórzano, et al., 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Further, CRT acknowledges the pervasive nature of racism as an imbedded component of behavior found in society and everyday life (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Museus, et al., 2012). Utilizing CRT, I positioned race as a basis for advocacy by acknowledging the influence of race and naming associated challenges in the approaches of student affairs professionals with students of color. With my use of CRT, I recognized and described the knowledge that came from the participants' experiences as people of color living in spaces that often ignored or marginalized their experiences (Museus, et al., 2012; Yosso, et al., 2009).

White people have used race to distinguish and categorize individuals who look different, labeling non-White people as inferior. Describing people of color as inferior allows White people to experience dominance and power over others. By centering race through CRT, I am recognizing the importance of race, and the intersection of race with other identities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). With CRT, race is recognized along with other multiple and intersecting

identities (Museus, et al., 2012). Each of the five tenets of CRT utilizes racial ideology to help marginalized and oppressed people of color convey their voice through sharing their stories (Solórzano, et al., 2000). Counter-storytelling is a common and widely used element of CRT that illuminates the ways society has disadvantaged people of color within society and educational environments (Closson, 2010). Connecting CRT to the experiences of student affairs professionals recognizes and centers the role of racism in their lived experiences. In this study, nine student affairs professionals discuss their experiences with race, and for eight participants, this also included identifying as a person of color.

CRT in Education

My use of CRT focused on and questioned the role of race, magnifying the voices of minoritized individuals in educational systems steeped with power, privilege, and oppression. My use of CRT in higher education focused on individual narratives and encouraged the sharing of each participant's personal experiences (Museus, et al., 2012). Application of CRT in education centered race and racism in the academic activities of the institution, including instruction and research. While simultaneously centering race and racism through the research process, I also used CRT to challenge traditional paradigms, methods, and approaches in the generation of knowledge (Solórzano, et al., 2000). As I collected data, CRT compelled me to ask how race influenced each participant's narrative and to critically question the role of power in shaping their perspective.

CRT offered a process to liberate and transform scholarship, challenging the history of research, policy, and practice (Museus, et al., 2012). Generation of knowledge from purely a White perspective is inaccurate and contributes to a perspective that only supports those who belong to the majority group. Integration of CRT in education builds an appreciation for

difference in scholarship and instruction and the centering of race establishes accountability for the role of race, challenging structures and environments that have the presence and influence of race (Sheared, et al., 2010). Critically questioning race moves the focus from recognizing the presence of race to understanding how race and marginalization informs experiences for student affairs professionals.

Application of CRT in the Study

The theoretical framework reinforced the study in several ways. First, the framework connected my theoretical perspective to existing theory and research about the influence of racism within campus environments. I also utilized the tenets of CRT in the development of the interview protocol, structuring questions that teased out elements of racism in the participants' narratives. The theoretical framework provided perspective while conducting the interviews using a narrative inquiry methodology. Additionally, the theoretical framework informed the analysis of data, and how I attributed meaning to the stories shared by the participants.

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Narrative Inquiry

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Narrative inquiry focuses on understanding individual lived experiences through an interdisciplinary method, viewing lives holistically through story-telling (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Story-telling weaves participants' voices together to highlight the voices of individuals and historically marginalized populations, previously excluded from participation in the generation of knowledge and scholarship (Appadurai, 2006; Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Delgado, 1989; Hones, 1998; Solórzano, & Yosso, 2002). As a methodology, narrative inquiry focuses on the uniqueness of each person's lived experience. Through my use of narrative inquiry, I shared participants' experiences to foster learning and engagement that can shape student affairs practice (Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Johnson & Christensen, 2013). Narratives are one of the

oldest forms for sense-making, a tool to provide different ways of understanding through the stories and lived experience, whereby participants communicate their reality through narrating a story (Adams, 2008; Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through conversation, narratives link the past to the present, connecting experiences and emotions to deepen understanding.

My use of narrative inquiry provided an opportunity to hear personal stories and experiences of the participants, learning about their socialization into student affairs and their approaches for working with and supporting. I gained a deeper understanding of each participant's experiences through listening to their narratives (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Retelling the participants' narratives allowed me to share their experiences and to better understand approaches to working with students of color (Delgado, 1989; Johnson & Christensen, 2013). As a researcher, it was important for me to consider the systems that may have prevented the participants from previously sharing their stories, and to ensure I shared their stories accurately (Adams, 2008). As I recruited participants, I remained conscious of how my actions may have limited the participation of potential participants and considered strategies that I could use to help ensure diversity in the participant pool.

Throughout this study, I recognized the role of privilege. At the beginning of this study, I was aware that people of color, historically, had fewer opportunities to share their story (Adams, 2008). Conducting this research with a transformative perspective, I remained cognizant of privilege by writing memos to record reflections of my privilege and how it influenced the study. Being conscientious about the role of power, I sought out diverse perspectives through the recruitment of participants to include traditionally silenced or minoritized perspectives (Delgado, 1989; Hones, 1998; Howard & Navarro, 2016). I also asked participants to provide their

perspectives about race, inequality and privilege, calling into question their role in supporting inclusive environments for the students of color (Paul-Emile, 2015).

Considerations for using Narrative Inquiry

Atkinson and Delamont (2006) cautioned narrative researchers to do more than simply collect narratives. Narratives are a form of social action; sharing participants' narratives is an important step in pushing social change forward (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006; Smith, 2007). Further, social justice is an inherent element of the transformative paradigm, which addresses inequality and injustice and seeks to challenge dominant perspectives through the promotion of multiple socially constructed realities (Mertens, 2007). My use of CRT, narratives, and theoretical perspective required me to emphasize the influence of critical perspectives in my design of the study, and share participant's narratives to push social change forward (Jones, et al., 2014). Narrative inquiry is a social and cultural exploration, whereby an individual expresses their viewpoint (Jones et al., 2014). Narrative inquiry is broader than stories and understanding lived experiences.

Through a sharing of narratives, I asked participants to share their experiences of working with students of color. My questions emphasized the role of culture and how culture supported students of color through the value, or lack thereof, of diversity. While each participant provided an account of their experience, as the researcher, I served as the narrator (Jones et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I communicated the story of each individual participant, while also creating meaning from all the narratives. As I identified knowledge across all narratives, I considered how to share that knowledge, while intentionally avoiding re-storying of participants' narratives. Throughout the research process I remained cognizant of what I shared through participants' narratives and how I utilized their experiences to amplify awareness and

understanding about supporting of students of color. Part of this cogitation was considering how I share the information with other professionals and how I can encourage them to do the same.

Methods

I conducted this study utilizing narrative inquiry as a methodology, focused through a lens of racism within campus environments. I also approached the study with CRT as a theoretical framework, to provide guidance in carrying out the following methods.

Participants

I selected participants for this study using criterion-based selection (Roulston, 2010), with individuals needing to meet specific characteristics to participate in the study. Characteristics for participants included full-time employment in a in a role or function that focused largely on supporting the needs of students through a program or service, with daily student interaction (Rosser & Javinar, 2009). Individuals must have had at least one year of full-time experience with a graduate degree in higher education and student affairs or a related field of study at the time of the interviews. My objective was to understand how student affairs approach their work with students of color and what influenced their approach. As such, I intentionally sought out perspectives that represented different social identities by promoting the study to identity-based social media groups. Research about student affairs professionals has focused on their preparation and the knowledge, skills, and abilities important for practice; however, this research is often from the perspective of faculty or senior administrators. Previous researchers have predominantly included the perspective of senior student affairs officers in the literature. As a result, I limited participation to entry and mid-level professionals. Rarely does research focuses on the perspective of the professional, or the relationships of student affairs professionals with students (Bensimon, 2007; Luedke, 2017). I selected student affairs

professionals as the participants to focus the study on their daily work experiences with students of color. Through this focus, I asked questions about how the participants understood and connected their practice to research and scholarship about race, campus environments, students of color, and preparation for student affairs professionals. I interviewed nine individuals for the study with various social identities. My rationale for asking participants to share social identities was based upon my perspective as a researcher, to include voices that may not always be included (Jones, et al., 2014). As a transformative researcher, I emphasized social justice and equity through representation of individuals from marginalized communities. For example, a woman of color who was first in family to attend college would have preference over a white male from a middle-class background.

I used two strategies to recruit participants. I utilized purposive sampling to elicit participation of student affairs professionals through my personal network, based upon existing relationships with colleagues through work at my previous institutions and professional association (Johnson & Christensen, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2010). To access my network, I reached out to participants through e-mail and social media, including Facebook and Instagram (APPENDIX A & C). I also contacted individuals in student affairs affinity groups on Facebook, a social media platform that allows individuals to electronically college with friends and acquaintances in an on-line forum. Additionally, I used snowball or network sampling to encourage participants that I purposefully identified to recommend additional participants, either at their institution, or through their own professional networks (APPENDIX B; Johnson & Christensen, 2013; Roulston, 2010). My use of both techniques expanded my opportunities to recruit participants with experiences in student affairs at varying levels. My use of snowball sampling also provided participants with the opportunity to actively

engage in the research process. My utilization of purposive and snowball sampling expanded the strategies described above, identifying participants, recognizing participant recruitment and selection can be an on-going process that is fluid and evolves over the course of data collection (Jones, et al., 2014). Both sampling strategies maximized my opportunities to recruit participants.

Data Collection

I collected data in three parts: artifact discussion, and two interviews. Each part of the process involved the participants. Prior to the interview, participants received and completed an electronic demographic questionnaire to determine their interest in participating in the study and to collect demographic information, which I used to shape the presentation of data in each narrative. Participants also completed a participant consent form as part of the demographic questionnaire. The demographic and consent form provided participants with further instructions about participation (APPENDIX D & E).

Artifact selection. For this study, participant narratives were the technique I used to collect data. Narratives and qualitative research focus on peoples' experiences and the meaning individuals associate with those experiences (Crotty, 1998; Johnson & Christensen, 2013; Merriam, & Tisdell, 2016). Since people do not always associate meaning with words, I asked participants to identify an artifact during the pre-interview part of the study with the following guiding prompt: Please identify an artifact that represents how you support students of color through your practice as a student affairs professional prior to the first interview. The artifact served as an elicitation device, with participants sharing and describing their chosen artifact during the first interview. In selecting the artifact, I asked participants to identify something with personal significance and meaning. An artifact can be a policy, event, ritual, photograph, or

any objects that holds meaning for the participant (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012). The artifact

served as a reflective tool, encouraging each participant to consider their approach in working

with students of color, and what informed that approach. Participants shared the process for

selecting their artifact in the first interview and provided a detailed description of the artifact,

along with a photo of the artifact.

I asked participants to use their artifact to share their experiences of working with

students of color, to reflect and contemplate their approach with students, and to communicate a

close and personal experience (Rendón, 2009). My use of artifacts as part of the data collection

method focused on the participant and not the object (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I included the

artifact in the study to help participants identify and share a narrative or story related to their

work supporting students of color (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participants connected their

artifact to their lived experiences, which produced deep insight and a form of wisdom that

represented their knowledge and practice (Rendón, 2009). Each artifact served as a

representation of each participant's work, their approach, and journey into student affairs work.

First interview. Participants completed two one-on-one interviews. I utilized

technology to digitally interview each participant through Google Hangouts and telephone calls.

As part of the interview, participants responded to a series of open-ended questions, intended to

elicit sharing of their narratives about supporting students of color (Appendix E). Questions

within the interview protocol connected participants' approach of supporting students of color to

aspects of campus environments and corresponding culture. I asked the participants questions

about racism and microaggressions, their work experiences with students of color, and campus

environments. Participants also shared their artifacts during this interview. Throughout this

interview and the research process, I served as the instrument of the study and determined if the

questions in my interview protocol collected relevant data (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2010). To ensure I had flexibility during interviews, I used a semi-structured protocol, which allowed me to ask questions based upon each participant's responses, to skip questions, to ask additional questions, and to engage in a story-telling process with each participant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Roulston, 2010). Participants reviewed the interview protocol at the beginning of the first interview, with an opportunity to add additional questions. Power was inherently a part of the research process. Engaging participants in the process allowed me to challenge the structural power dynamic that distances the participant from the research as I worked to generate new knowledge and scholarship (Prasad, 2005). Participants were also involved in the study through their review of the interview transcript. I used pseudonyms to provide anonymity to the participants and to encourage comfort as they disclosed details through their narrative (Jones, et al., 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Second interview. After the first interview, participants reviewed their interview transcript as preparation for the second interview. During this interview, I asked participants to reflect on the following: What does your story of working with students of color mean? I intended this question to provide another opportunity to actively engage participants in the generation of meaning and to help ensure I accurately heard their story. During the second interview, I asked participants questions to expand upon the details of their first interview and socialization into student affairs. I planned for the second interview to provide a focus on how power and privilege influenced the daily work with students of color for each participant. I also asked questions specific to the participants' student affairs experiences, and their artifact. This interview included time for the participant to reflect upon previous responses from the first interview and transcript.

Analysis

My perspective as a transformative researcher compelled me to center and re-center the role of race throughout the research process. In doing so, I acknowledged the imbedded nature of race and racism in daily experiences, in both expressive and muted ways. I applied CRT as an analytical perspective to highlight occurrences of the five tenets in participants' narratives. The five tenets of CRT include: 1) the centrality of race, 2) a challenge to dominant ideology, 3) commitment to social justice and social transformation, 4) centering the knowledge of experience through counter-storytelling, and 5) a transdisciplinary perspective highlight the influence of race in the shaping structures, dialogue, policy and practice from the perspective of marginalized individuals and mandates social activism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Museus, et al., 2012; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). As my analytical framework, I used CRT to maintain a critical focus on racism, focusing attention on how racism informs participants' narratives and interactions with students of color. Research conducted under the transformative paradigm included an analysis of power and inequity through social relationships; the five tenets of CRT focused on power and inequity, critically questioning the influence of race (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Mertens, 2010; Museus, et al., 2012; Yosso, et al., 2009). The role of race varied in salience for the participants and their experiences. Analyzing participants' narratives through CRT connected the narratives to race.

Further, my worldview included the utilization of a transformative perspective. Incorporating a critical perspective in this research focused attention on the structure and organization of social structures, understanding the role and dynamic of race and power within the participants' experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). My use of CRT as a theoretical framework emphasized societal influence and power dynamics associated with race and racism

in campus environments (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The combination of my theoretical framework and CRT centered race, power, and privilege throughout the analysis and sense-making process for the data.

Coding and thematic analysis. I reviewed each narrative, identifying key words or short phrases to synthesize meaning within segments of qualitative data (Jones, et al., 2014; Saldana, 2016). The use of coding helped me organize information within each of the narratives. I used open or initial coding as the coding technique. Open coding is an organizational approach where the researcher is open to all possibilities contained within the data (Jones, et al., 2014). Through open coding I considered the information contained within each participant's narratives, as opposed to assigning words and phrases that have meaning to me as the researcher.

After my first review of each narrative, I used narrative analysis to identify common themes or ideas across all narratives (Hones, 1998; Roulston, 2010). Collectively, I used common themes and ideas to weave a larger story of how participants worked with students of color. The analysis acknowledged each narrative without reducing information in the narrative, which can occur with the use of a coding process. This approach involved utilizing all narratives to move from singular stories to common or reoccurring elements (Roulston, 2010). Presentation of the narrative mattered just as much as the narrative itself; research is a medium for the collection of narratives with the analysis and presentation serving as a conduit for sharing the story (Adams, 2008). I presented initial themes identified from the first interview during the second interview, to afford participants the opportunity to ensure I accurately captured their voice. I used the participants' perception of initial themes to serve as a cross-check for the language I used in writing about their experiences. I identified the findings after a two-stage review process where I read the participants' two interviews individually, making notes

throughout. After the first review, I compiled notes into a list of themes and questions that I then applied to the transcripts, in a second review.

Additionally, I reviewed the CRT tenets with the themes and keywords from each narrative to explore connections between the narratives and theory. I accomplished this process by reviewing each theme or keyword while referring the CRT tenets. If a theme or keyword aligned with the description of a tenet, I noted the connection. Exploring the connection for each of the five CRT tenets to each narrative provided a point of comparison, to acknowledge similarities and differences between theory and experience. Connecting CRT to this stage in the process also encouraged me to consider the centrality of race in this study, and to question how race influenced the experiences shared by each of the participants.

Participant voice. As a transformative researcher, the voice of my participants was an important element of the research process. In communicating participants' stories, it was important to remain cognizant of how I may re-story a participants' narrative, which could reduce or eliminate elements of their experience, altering important details of their story in ways that change the meaning of what the participant has experienced (Jones, et al., 2014). Analysis of narratives started with a review of each narrative as told by participants (Hones, 1998). Involving participants in the research process served as one way to ensure their voice was accurately captured.

Qualitative rigor. The criteria used to evaluate qualitative research is based in issues of trustworthiness or reliability (Jones, et al., 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). High quality research in the qualitative tradition focuses on understanding how people interpret their experiences and how they ascribe meaning those experiences, with rigor present throughout the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As such, language is powerful

and poses important considerations for research; language affects communication of the problem

and the assumptions and beliefs that inform the process (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013; Sue, 2010a).

The basis of qualitative research originates from the word quails which is focused on what is,

with the following criteria used to determine the worth of a study: ensuring consistency between

the research questions, data collection methods, and analysis procedures; proper background

knowledge and awareness of the topic being researched and articulation of the value of the study

(Jones, et al., 2014). The focus of rigor concerns issues of trustworthiness, credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Jones, et al., 2014; Marshall & Rossman,

2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Trustworthiness is achieved through confidence in the findings

of the study, a result of conduct the study in an ethical manner and sharing the positionality of

the researcher, which I did in Chapter 1 (Jones, et al., 2014). Credibility in the findings of the

study was achieved through use of activities that assisted in confirming the findings, including

the use of member checks to confirm information aligned with the perspectives of the

participants, which I incorporated by the sharing the first interview transcripts along with initial

thoughts (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Narratives are lived experiences, voiced through

individual stories, each with a unique perspective (Appadurai, 2006; Clandinin & Huber, 2002;

Hones, 1998; Delgado, 1989; Solórzano, & Yosso, 2002). The unique nature of narratives and

narrative inquiry makes conformity difficult, if not impossible. Qualitative research does not

promote conformity, it acknowledges lived experiences and provides opportunities to explore the

uniqueness of experiences.

Participants' review of data. After the first interview, I asked participants to review the

transcript of their interview and initial themes presented during their second interview. My

inclusion of participants in this process served as member checking or participant validation

(Johnson & Christensen, 2013; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Providing each participant with a copy of their interview transcripts helped to ensure that I accurately captured their narrative and asked follow-up questions based upon an accurate depiction of their story with minimal re-storying through my perspective as the researcher. The transformative paradigm and narrative inquiry both emphasize participant voice (Mertens, 2010; Jones, et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Co-creating interpretations of participants' narrative from their first interview provided an ethical checkpoint to ensure I captured each story as accurately as possible and that that descriptions describe experience (Jones, et al., 2014).

Researcher Reflexivity

As I described in chapter one, my interest in this research stemmed from my own personal experiences as a student and professional of color who has experienced and navigated multiple environments. My analysis and interpretation of each participant's story is a re-telling of their experience and in some ways, I am re-storying their narrative through my own perspective. Throughout the process, it was imperative for me to be cognizant of the power I held as the researcher, noting the description of participant's stories through my literary point of view. While I wrote descriptions of their experiences, I recognized my influence, power, and privilege in sharing the participants' stories. All knowledge creation involves a dynamic of power that is created and transmitted through historical and societal influences; consequently, it was important for me to ensure that I told the participants' narratives without biasing their experience or perspective (Jones, et al., 2014; Prasad, 2005).

Transformative research prioritizes the voice of participants, including the authentic input of participants throughout the research process. The input and participation of participants required me to be understanding of what is relevant to their experience and what is not relevant

(Roulston, 2010). It was also important that I was aware of my influences that shaped the narrative and how I communicated the narratives (Adams, 2008). I used memos to write reflective notes throughout the study to capture thoughts, themes, and questions, which helped me remain aware of my biases (Johnson & Christensen, 2013). My memos helped in developing each story and communicating shared themes.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I described my approach to this study by sharing the purpose for this study and providing my research questions. My perspective as a transformative researcher offered insight into how I perceive knowledge and the approach I will take in crafting new knowledge. Throughout the study, I paid close attention to my perspectives, proactively working to avoid biasing participant's stories. Following my theoretical prospective, I detailed the process that I used to conduct this study, including the identification and recruitment of participants and elements involved as part of the study. I also detailed how I involved participants throughout each stage in the process. Participants were not be solely sources of data, I asked each participant to actively engage in crafting meaning from their experience, as part of a larger story about supporting students of color. In the next chapter, I will share participants' narratives and explore findings, as identified through their lived experiences.

CHAPTER 4

PORTRAITS OF STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS AND FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present portraits of the participant and findings from their stories. Each participant shared their narrative through two interviews and an artifact representing their approach to working with students of color. I present the participants in the order of the first interviews through my retelling of their story, and my perspective as the researcher in this study. I retell each narrative with the intent of describing the story as it was shared. Prior to the first interview, each participant shared their salient identities, which I included at the beginning of each portrait. The participants shared their stories by responding to a series of reflective questions about their student affairs journey. Participants also submitted an artifact to represent their work with students of color. Examples of artifacts that I provided to the participants included a copy of an institutional policy, a student or institutional event, an institutional ritual such as a cultural graduation celebration, a photograph, or any objects that holds meaning. From this description, each participant submitted a visual representation and description of their artifact, which they discussed in their first interview. As I reviewed the interviews, I identified several categories to help share each portrait. Each participant's student affairs story served as a point of reflection and illustration of how they approach work with students of color and how race informs this work.

Ryan

Ryan identifies as a straight, cisgender, and middle-class Black man. Currently, Ryan works in social justice education and multicultural affairs as a director at a medium-sized private

research university. Ryan leads and manages a team of social justice educators responsible for facilitating various programs, including peer education, intergroup dialogue, trainings, workshops, and affinity space dialogue programs. Ryan works primarily with students, but also engages faculty and staff to facilitate social justice broadly. As a director, Ryan serves on the student affairs divisional leadership and provides insight to social justice issues campus-wide.

Student Affairs Story

Ryan's journey with student affairs began as an undergraduate student. Prior to choosing student affairs, Ryan planned to become an investment banker, majoring in finance. As an undergraduate, Ryan was involved in fraternity and sorority life, multicultural affairs, and residential life. Connections with advisors, peers, and other student affairs professionals helped Ryan pursue student affairs as his career path. During his senior year, Ryan shifted his career trajectory from investment banking toward student affairs, deciding to apply to student affairs graduate programs. Following completion of his undergraduate degree, Ryan enrolled in a graduate student affairs program.

Attending graduate school was beneficial for Ryan; it allowed him to craft assignments around areas of interest, using papers and assignments to explore issues related to students of color and underrepresented students. Ryan's graduate experience solidified his interest in working with students of color and multicultural affairs. While the graduate program and experience were beneficial, Ryan also shared a critique of his program, noting a disconnect between class conversations and working with students of color. Ryan shared discussions neglected students' complex identities without recognizing intersectionality,

> We often thought about students of color in a silo or in a monolith and neglected to hold
> the complexities, either at the intersection or even within, you can take the example of

working with Latinx students, that diaspora is so vast, so many narratives and on that

conversation, it was like this is the way, this is the one way, this is the one thing that you

need to be thinking about. I think that did a disservice in many ways.

He also noticed that conversations did not acknowledge systemic oppression, which is a

challenge of engaging students of color and promoting social justice.

While Ryan appreciated his master's program, he recognized a need for more depth about race

and racism, as he described,

I think we talked about student identities and populations, we talked about issues and

gaps from an access standpoint, but I think systemic oppression was rarely named as a

cause, as a causal reality in that dynamic and I think that was a disservice.

Ryan's experiences in his graduate program provided a glimpse of the challenges he would

encounter in working with students of color and confronting racism and oppression.

After completing his graduate program, Ryan accepted a position in residential life. The

experiences of his first full-time position were influential. Ryan's reflection of his first post-

master's role was poignant and descriptive, "Mhhm, a lot of it was at my first institution in my

second year there and they felt like full on onslaughts. I felt like I was getting punched." In the

role, Ryan experienced the challenges of working with students of color. While Ryan ultimately

wanted to pursue multicultural affairs, there were more opportunities in residential life, which

prompted his acceptance of a residence director position after grad school. The position was a

starting point to pursue his desired functional area. In the position Ryan gained important

perspective, as he describes here:

I got to my first institution and had a great and very challenging experience at the same

time…we were very over-resourced as a campus, but under-resourced as it related to

supporting under-represented and minoritized students. That work tended to fall on the

folks who were passionate about it. They tended to be folks of color and queer folks and

so I followed that natural progression.

As a person of color, institutional leaders afforded Ryan opportunities to engage students of color, in addition to his primary position. Ryan noted people of color often performed two or three roles on campus, including advising student groups, attending forums, and serving on search committees.

While Ryan and other professionals of color received additional assignments, Ryan's White counterparts did not assume similar additional assignments, "It just became some folks' work, or really folks of color work." As a result, Ryan described the additional work as a "race tax," which Ryan described more fully, "it felt like an added cost to our employment, on to our careers, to our work experience, that our White colleagues didn't have to pay." Ryan's experiences felt distinctly different than his White counterparts, largely "tokenizing," with Ryan explaining, "I think what was challenging about my time with my first institution was how much of it was by choice, and how much was by environment." Ryan's perception of the race tax resulted from the broader institutional culture where people of color assumed additional assignments, as mentioned above.

Ryan provided a direct and honest view about his work with students of color and his perception of their experiences. Ryan was very aware of how racial differences influenced his narrative and the narratives for students of color:

But I think there's so much pain that our students of color are holding on campuses,

because of that lack of acknowledgement. I think the fact that we create a paradigm

where we ask the question of, how can we include our students of color within our

campus community. As if they're not already in it, right? As if they're guests.

After several roles in multicultural affairs, Ryan's work shifted to a focus on social justice

education, allowing Ryan to connect dialogue, workshops, and affinity spaces with the

experiences of students of color. Within this new emphasis, Ryan seeks to fosters community

and uplift marginalized voices and narratives.

Working with Students of Color

Ryan's work with students of color centered around his student affairs story. Ryan

described his approach through a focus on dialogue, supporting activism, and advocacy,

As much as I love dialogue, I think dialogue means nothing without policy implications

and so just to have that symbolized in that way speaks my approach to working with

students of color, like how am I honoring the stories and the narratives that they share

and actually pushing for greater amounts of system level change.

Ryan shared his perception that professionals in multicultural affairs are set-up to "fail." Ryan

clarified his observation that individuals working in multicultural affairs are positioned to be

viewed by students of color as the system of support rather than a part of a larger support system,

"I think they are positioned as the sole supporters for students who need outrageous and endless

amounts of support as they navigate very violent spaces." In this situation, students of color

receive support, but at a cost. Ryan also observed the importance of positionality of

multicultural and social justice work and questioned if this work truly supports students,

or its positioned to be a space where we can create a false reality for students where we

are listening to them and that there is space to talk and process, and to be in community

dialogue. I think in some ways it lets the university off the hook.

Ryan and his colleagues in multicultural affairs provided students with significant support in safe cultural spaces. The responsibility for supporting students of color consumed large amounts of Ryan's professional energy. Limiting support to multicultural spaces precluded necessary systemic change within the institution.

Ryan described his willingness to stand-up and say something, especially when other colleagues seemed hesitant to speak up. In several experiences, Ryan observed other professionals waiting for students of color to say something, to discuss their dissatisfaction or to communicate to administrators what they need to be successful, as he described here,

> We have to wait for the students to say the thing, which I think just creates another burden on them and I remember in this forum, I don't remember exactly what I said, but we were talking about all these different potential solutions and things that we could do and I remember that I just got fed up and I raised my hand and I said something along the lines of if we had the solutions here, on our campus, we would have already enacted them.

Ryan advocated for understanding institutional culture, including the people and the history of the institution, as a way to push social justice forward. Ryan perceived institutions as neglecting their history and their identity, which adds to the pain students of color experience, "I think we have plenty of evidence that show us, tells us what students are experiencing, right? We don't need another campus survey, right? We already know." Ryan expressed his willingness to challenge deficit perspectives and frameworks,

> …I feel that we get so caught up in reputation and marketing and appeasing folks, that we rarely struggle, or we really struggle with being honest and so I think it takes boldness and courage to push back on some of those institutional cultural norms."

Ryan recognizes and affirms students of color as a vital part of the community, to ensuring they don't feel like guests within their own institution.

Throughout Ryan's story, it was evident that working with students of color was exhausting, primarily because of institutional culture and a lack of support from various people and institutional structures. Ryan described the work as burdensome, requiring a lot of energy. Ryan also noted that the burden came from the expectations of institutional leaders.

Ryan facilitates a variety of social justice programs where students discuss their experiences. Ryan described students' retelling of their experiences as reliving pain, which can be a triggering experience and can trigger other students. Ryan was conscientious that students' experiences can be traumatic and painful considering the systemic oppression within institutions of higher education; however, students' stories of trauma are also beautiful. Ryan views students' stories as an opportunity for healing, to be brave and to share experiences, to explore the influence of those experiences, and to push forward with positive change. Ryan clearly supports students of color to maintain positive mental health, to persist through trauma informed experiences. Ryan noted the importance of positive mental health and persistence for students of color in graduate preparation programs and within student affairs.

Supporting Students' Resistance

Ryan selected an image of a #BlackLivesMatter march he attended in a former role (Figure 1), which visually represented the connection between his work on-campus with diversity and a desire to be connected to a diverse society. While Ryan was not involved in planning the march, he and his students attended in solidarity of the local high school youth who organized the march. Ryan connected the picture to his work with students of color, "I believe that our work should be connected to issues happening on campus and within our broader

society, driven by students, courageous and bold, action-oriented and challenging leadership and

policy makers to spark broader systemic change."

Figure 2: A photo taken during a Black Lives Matter rally Ryan attended with students.

Ryan explained his artifact acknowledges race and racism on a different scale, showing

solidarity for the advancement of equity and inclusion by youth,

My students wanted to join them in solidarity and we wanted to join them in solidarity.

For me, it meant a lot of things. I think one it being youth driven, I think it was

particularly meaningful in thinking about, as I do my work, who is it for. I think my

work, I always want my work to be reflective and honoring our future and our past

ancestry all at the same time. It was kind of symbolic of that.

The artifact is symbolic of Ryan's focus on student activism to social justice in his work. Ryan's

artifact is a visual representation of student activism and justice and equity in action,

I think student activism or organizing is what justice and equity look like in action. I

think it requires such amounts of bravery and courage and truth telling and it compels

you to make a choice that I think is how I think about work with students.

Ryan mentioned he also chose the image of the march to represent his focus on building

relationships, "I really try to shift my approach of the work as one that I'm an organizer, and I'm

organizing and building coalitions on this campus to create more justice and equitable

environment." Throughout his story, Ryan shared about being an advocate for students and social justice, a resource to help enact change for students of color.

Tamara

Tamara identifies as an upper-middle class cisgender Black woman from a military family, where her mother is the military parent, which Tamara described as a non-typical gender role, while her father works in education. Both of Tamara's parents have graduate degrees, which influenced her awareness and access to education. Currently, Tamara works as an assistant director for a leadership scholars academy at a large urban institution. In her role, Tamara supports leadership and service-learning, helping students to develop leadership skills and participate in service.

Student Affairs Story

Tamara's student affairs story began serendipitously. As an undergraduate, Tamara was involved in student government, several community internships, and worked in the admissions office. Her role as a campus ambassador helped solidify her interest in student affairs and serving students. After consulting with a career advisor, Tamara pursued graduate school, accepting an assistantship in student involvement supporting student organizations and student government.

Serving as a graduate assistant provided Tamara with insight into the work of a full-time student affairs professional. Tamara acknowledged that while her assistantship was helpful, most of her preparation came from experiences in the first year of her full-time role, "I think that when I started as a graduate student I was approaching it from the perspective of a student leader who really enjoyed their experience, not really knowing about the administrative side of the house." Tamara also considered student development theory helpful, especially theories about

Black identity development. Tamara saw herself in these theories, which gave a wider perspective about her experiences. Her perspective informed how she would approach working with students of color, by looking at other theories and being able to understand how they could apply to students.

Throughout her story, Tamara reflected and expanded upon the realization that not all students of color receive needed support during their college experience as she described,

There are definitely certain students you will see in the student union who are visible, who you can check in on, but there are a number of students, like our commuter students or because of our size, we have so many classes that are online, we just simply will never be able to connect with, unless they intentionally reach out to us.

Making sure students of color felt visible was a prominent theme for Tamara. Tamara discussed attending student events so students of color would see her as someone they could talk to when needed. Being present was Tamara's way of supporting students of color.

Involvement in NASPA, a student affairs association, is also an important part of Tamara's student affairs story. Tamara's became involved during her graduate experience and has volunteer to support graduate students, new professionals, and her regional. NASPA has allowed Tamara to network and remain motivation to continue with student affairs work.

Working with Students of Color

Tamara centers her work with students of color alongside the Social Change Model of Leadership (Komives, Wagner, & Associates, 2017), which is the leadership model for the leadership academy she supports. Tamara's focus is helping students identify social inequities, addressing root causes, and shaping students' perception of service. Within this role, Tamara

also oversees a women's leadership development program and a multicultural leadership

program to discuss gender, multiculturalism, race, culture, ethnicity, and diversity.

Working at a young institution, Tamara noted there are fewer institutional remnants of racism

and exclusion. The institution recently celebrated 50 years since its founding. Tamara referred

to the institutional history to inform how she approaches work with students of color, structuring

her approach around the institution's location and history. The presence of minimal racist

structures within the institutions provides Tamara with a talking point to speak with students

about being included and how they can feel included. Tamara also incorporates intersectionality

into her work with students of color. She believes students should be aware of their identities,

how identities influence their experiences, and how their identities intersect with privilege,

> I think whenever I work with students, trying to being mindful of all the identities they
>
> bring with them and the trials and challenges that come along with those identities and
>
> understanding they might have faced obstacles because of those identities and those
>
> obstacles might be different than mine, but still being mindful and respectful of those.

Navigating identity in campus spaces is challenging, especially for students of color who may

struggle to find others with similar experiences. Tamara uses intersectionality to recognize

students of color for who they are, "I think whenever I work with students, trying to being

mindful of all the identities they bring with them and the trials and challenges that come along

with those..." The intersectionality of Tamara's own identities also informs how her work.

Tamara identifies as an educated cisgender woman with social class, education, and familial

background as additional salient identities that shape how she engages with students.

Tamara discussed the importance of exhibiting care by attending student events, providing an opportunity for students to literally see a staff person who cares. Tamara's also actively listens to students, which helps her relate to students of color, as she described,

> But then I think about several years ago, and like I mentioned with Black Lives Matter, and the number of shootings that were taking place and the whole shooting perspective. The LatinX community hurt a great deal. And the LGBTQ community. And I'm trying to think that was one where professionals of color ... that trauma was something that like I know I personally couldn't relate to. And so, a simple you good? Let's talk about things. How are you feeling, right? And so understanding how they were feeling. They weren't able to process it because it affected me the same way.

This experience helped Tamara realize a response is not always necessary. Students will have moments where it is important to have someone who will just listen. Listening allows a certain level of vulnerability to occur between Tamara and students. When it is relevant, Tamara shares pieces of her story with students. There are times where students have challenged Tamara. She believes it is important to handle students' challenges with grace, to be honest and accept the feedback that students provide.

The idea of meeting students where they are is central to how Tamara engages with students. Tamara shared a conversation with a former student who was impressed at how often they saw Tamara at student events,

> gosh, I see you at everything. And I'm thinking like, "good! I'm glad! You know we want you to feel like there are staff members who are supporting you or coming to your events." And I think once you start building with one student, the students will talk to

each other too. And they'll say, "oh you should go talk to Ms. Tamara. She's a great resource. She's one of our lead scholars."

Tamara is present for students, providing time and thoughtful and meaningful conversation.

"Oh The Places You Will Go"

Tamara selected a water bottle with the phrase, *Oh the Places You'll Go,* from the Dr. Seuss book with the same name as her artifact, a gift she received from a former student. Students who graduate from the program Tamara works with read *Oh the Places You'll Go* during the program's commencement ceremony to conclude their time with the leadership scholar's academy. The water bottle provides Tamara with a daily reminder that she can influence and support students, helping them to consider the places they can and will go after persisting toward completion of their degree.

Figure 3: An image of the water bottle with a graphic of Dr. Seuss' *Oh the Places You'll Go*.

Tamara further described the water bottle as representative of her philosophy with students of color. Tamara embraces an open-door policy where students can come into her office and talk to her whenever need someone to listen. No matter where students go, they can always come to Tamara. During conversations, Tamara guides students to the places they want to go, discussing interests, career goals, and involvement with students,

Right now you're looking for internships, or you want to go to med school. Instead of

doing these five clubs, maybe you should contact a doctor and do some shadowing hours.

So things like that. Trying to provide them with an opportunity to talk with someone.

Tamara works to be present and available for students of color, providing an opportunity for

them to stop by and talk. For example, the movie Black Panther came out before Tamara's

second interview. Anytime a Black student came into her office following its release, the movie

was the first thing Tamara and the student would discuss. As a professional of color Tamara is

able to engage in a shared experience with students of color, especially Black students, about

what it is like to be a person of color, something a White professional cannot experience.

Tamara uses conversations and relationships to provide support to students and to ensure their

mental, physical, and emotional well-being. Tamara described the use of her relationships with

colleagues to ensure that students are well,

> Let's say we have a student of concern with something like their grades, but we can tell
>
> there's something off and the student doesn't want to open up about it, I will refer
>
> them…to University Cares. University Cares will never tell me what they talked about,
>
> they will just say we've made contact with the student.

Some students come back to Tamara and share what's going on and how they are doing. Even if

a student does not share their experience with Tamara, she is able to help check on students to

make sure they are doing well.

Conversations and relationships are Tamara's methods for connecting with students.

When a student comes into the office, Tamara asks questions to help students become involved,

to discuss mental health and wellness, or share daily experiences. It is not possible for every

student to come into Tamara's office, a fact she named in her story; however, every and any

student has the opportunity to come and speak with her, if they choose. Embracing an open-door policy and having an interest in connecting with students is one of the ways Tamara works to support students of color at her institution.

Social Equity and Supporting Students of Color

Supporting students of color through relationships and a focus on social equity were prominent approaches in Tamara's narrative. Tamara discussed the social inequities students of color face at her institution, largely due to institutional size, and student enrollment. The large student population for the institution makes it challenging to ensure that all students are accessing support resources. Tamara mentioned that staff within the institution spend energy recruiting and admitting students of color, but support ends there, "I think like many institutions, we do a lot to get them here, but then we're not doing a lot once they're here." Attending events was one-way Tamara described her understanding of the support needed to acknowledge students' racial experiences. Tamara was also honest about the culture of her institution,

> [Diversity…]It's not truly woven into the entire fabric of the institution. And so, I think that's a huge part of it. Right? It's that you, unless you're a new professional that works within diversity programming or multicultural affairs, you're not going to get that at that component of it.

Being available helped Tamara counter the disconnected nature of diversity within her institution. Tamara cannot reach all students, but she can influence the students she does meet.

Larry

Larry identifies as an Asian, more specifically Chinese man. Currently, Larry works at a private urban research university in career services, providing career counseling to engineering students, through traditional 30-minute appointments. He also supports career fairs and

programming that bring employers to campus to interact with students as prospective candidates. Larry's experiences as a person of color and immigrant were poignant influences, informing his approach with students of color and international students.

Student Affairs Story

Larry's story began before college, at eight years old, when his family immigrated into the United States. His parent did not speak English and do not today, which informs Larry's racial identity and his identities as a first-generation college student and an immigrant. Learning English was an influential challenge for Larry's developmental and educational journey. Larry's understanding of his identities was challenging, but helped him develop an appreciation for his experiences. Larry did not experience college in a linear progression; he transferred twice within a semester before arriving at the institution where he would ultimately graduate. Within a few weeks of arriving at the first institution, Larry realized the cost of attendance – at the time $20,000 dollars a year. Unable to justify the expense, he returned home to attend a nearby state institution, until transferring once more. Larry navigated the transitions on his own, as a first-generation college student and immigrant with non-English speaking parents.

After making his last transfer, student involvement helped Larry persist and ultimately graduate. Larry became involved with the Asian American Center and formed a relationship with the center's director. The importance of Larry's relationship with the director was pivotal for his undergraduate career and his student affairs journey as he described,

> she was able to provide some insight, like you shouldn't approach it this way, but maybe you should take this class, maybe you should do this. It opened a lot of doors for me, to feel at home because I always had, I had a center that I could go to, a physical space to go to, all of my friends stemmed from that area.

The center became a home for Larry, a place to feel connected to the institution and to other people, something that was in his previous institutions. Larry eventually became a resident assistant (RA) and discovered a mentor, which led to participation in the National Association of Student Personnel Association (NASPA) national undergraduate fellows (NUFP) program. The NASPA NUFP program is an undergraduate fellowship program for aspiring student affairs professionals from traditionally marginalized identities and groups. Larry later enrolled in a student affairs graduate program. Prior to beginning his master's degree, Larry used informational interviews with current professionals to learn more about student affairs, which he described as influential relationships,

> all the people that I met who have been so gracious, so caring, and allowed me to be, to have the questions that I have and to ask them without saying you know that's a stupid question, that we should really think about it that way. I think that's how I, and of course, I think those two things were really helpful, the formal training and speaking with a lot of people who I call friends or mentors, people I go to things with.

Larry described the interviews as a foundational component of his preparation for student affairs work. The interviews shaped Larry's approach with initiating conversations and mentoring other student affairs professionals.

Larry's graduate preparation program exposed him to student development theories, which expanded his knowledge, "…the theoretical frameworks that we have to operate under definitely helped me even though there are not a lot of them out there. Only a handful." The theories he learned were useful, but only scratched the surface in terms of true preparation,

> I think that something we're challenged with, I use the person's name like Jean Kim we all know that she did the Asian American identity development with like 9 Japanese

American women and I'm like why are we continuing, if that's a critique why are we

continuing to use it, why can't we find new ones?

Larry's graduate experiences also helped clarify his racial identity, informing his approach

toward working with students of color.

Larry highlighted the challenges of being and feeling different, having to learn English,

and having parents who don't speak English in his student affair story. Working primarily with

international students, Larry is in a unique position to guide his students. Larry has first-hand

experience of the complexities associated with assimilating campus environments and US culture

as a student of color. Larry can provide support similarly to his receipt of support through the

Asian American Center at his undergraduate institution.

Working with Students of Color

As a career adviser, Larry works primarily with engineering students from India and

China. Larry often engages students in conversations about cultural norms and practices,

including race and ethnicity. Advising conversations provide Larry with an opportunity to help

students develop an informed job search process, while also understanding how their identities

influence that process. The students Larry advises are very academically focused, which he

described as a challenge,

> For a lot of students, they will have the high GPAs, but they don't understand they don't
>
> get the job when they go into an interview because they don't understand that in
>
> American culture, and often times it's where it's how you perform in an interview, how
>
> well you can speak and often times they do, I try to, part of our thing is to give students
>
> hope.

Even though the topics are tough, Larry strives to help students succeed, especially since most of his international students are confronting cultural, racial, and ethnic barriers. As international students, they are navigating their racial identity, in addition to being international, and other salient identities. Larry works to help students fully embrace their own identity,

> some students who were electrical engineers here where I work, they will say 'Well, I'm an electrical engineer, but I'm not a good Asian. I'm not good at Math. And I'll say, "Well, you know what? You're good at what you're good at."

The high achieving nature of Larry's students causes them to have expectations about their academic performance, which creates assumptions about their racial and ethnic identity. Many of Larry's conversations with students focus on abandoning stereotypes and assumptions about racial and ethnic identities. For example, Larry shares with his students that not all Asian students are good at math, and that is ok. Larry's focuses on helping students understand and embrace their identity, progressing from one aspect of their identity, to the next.

Larry's approach is also about embracing the intersectional identities of each student, "Oftentimes the intersectionality part, we forget that…a student, like ourselves, can hold multiple identities and in order to recognize fully all those identities and everything affecting the student and taking it seriously, I don't know." Larry acknowledges and focuses on students' intersecting identities to help prepare them for spaces that can be marginalizing and dominated by Whiteness. Larry's understanding and honoring of identities helps students of color stay true to themselves, "understanding the game they're going into," and equipping students to survive and thrive.

Back to Basics

Larry chose a diversity and internship career preparation program as his artifact for this study (Figure 3). Larry had the opportunity to revamp the program, describing the previous iteration as too confusing. Larry's reboot of the program focuses on teaching baseline skills to students of color so they are considered by employers during campus recruitment sessions.
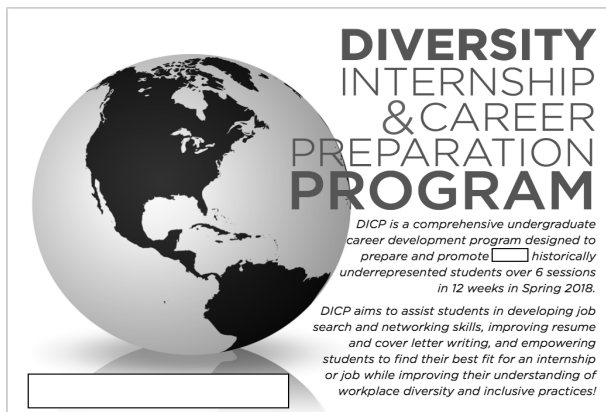
Figure 4: A flyer of the Diversity Internship & Career Preparation Program.

Larry's passion for supporting students of color became clear as he described this program. Students of color are more than diversity statistics for future employers. He emphasized the need to consider students' talents and not how they will help diversify a company. The program provides students of color with tools to navigate spaces that will be a part of their future work environments. Like institutions of higher education, these spaces may include microaggressions and systems of power and oppression.

As a career advisor, Larry's works to prepare students for jobs or internships. A central piece of this function is developing opportunities for relationships and communication between students and potential employers as Larry described,

for a lot of marginalized groups and students of color, coming in, they are coming into a

space that was not built for them, they don't really take them into consideration, other

than as a body count, we have X amount of this and push them out to the market.

Larry believes students need to understand how to navigate spaces, including the cultural and

communication implications that are a part of those spaces. It is not enough to help students find

a job. This program helps students understand how to interact within their office space, with

coworkers and supervisors.

The Unrealized State of Diversity

Larry brings a unique perspective as an immigrant and professional working with

international students. Reflecting on his experiences of transferring and understanding the

influence of his racial identity allowed Larry to identify challenges in working with students of

color. A key take-away of Larry's narrative is the unrealized nature of diversity. Institutions

enroll students of color without considering how to properly support their experiences,

I don't think we do a good job in terms of providing spaces for students of color, we have

one office here, it's not even a cultural center, it's a center for multicultural education and

programs…but all of the work is dumped on them, the microscope is on them to do

something, but they're not even a cultural center.

Diversity should be everyone's work, but it is still "dumped" on professionals who work in

multicultural centers or cultural centers. The immense workload leaves most students of color

without the resource and support that Larry described as helpful to his undergraduate experience.

John

John identifies as a Filipino American man, who also identifies as first-generation and

gay. John was the only participant who did not pursue a graduate degree in a higher education

and student affairs program, and currently works in a community college setting. As a result, John's student affairs story includes experiences outside of student affairs. John currently works in educational equity and support, coordinating an educational equity program at a mid-sized community college that receives funding through educational equity funding from the Chancellor's Office for the California community college system.

Student Affairs Story

John's student affairs story began with his undergraduate employment and involvement. As an undergrad, John served as a RA and as a peer academic advisor. He also was active in clubs and organizations. John enjoyed involvement, but as he advanced in his major, he decided to pursue opportunities in human resources before pursuing student affairs. Following graduation, John worked in corporate human resources and unlike the other participants, John pursued student affairs after time outside of higher education.

After several years of full-time work, John pursued his graduate degree in business, enrolling in a master's of business administration (MBA). John's educational path affirms that student affairs professionals have different journeys and varied educational backgrounds. After returning to school to pursue his MBA, John began considering student affairs. He received an offer from a student leadership office supporting a grant program for Asian American, Native American, and Pacific Islander students. John did not plan to pursue student affairs; however, working directly with students of color and marginalized populations on a college campus was attractive to him. John's acceptance of the position exposed him to the world of student affairs,

> So, I got that offer and also an offer from a big-box insurance company and though I
> would be making twice as much with the insurance company, I was kind of like let me do
> this whole student affairs things for a little bit and test it out and see. I liked being on

campus, it was close for me to go to class. I gave it a shot and if it didn't work out, I was

going to go ahead and switch back to corporate.

Switching from human resources to student affairs allowed John to continue work with people

and to figure out their motivations, an aspect he enjoyed about HR. The ability to make a

difference in the experiences of students was a deciding factor in the switch.

John eventually transitioned into his current position coordinating a program that

provides support to under-represented, and under-supported students from marginalized

backgrounds, primarily African-American/Black Students, Native American/Indigenous

students, and Latinx students. The program helps prepare these students to transfer to four-year

institutions and continue their education as John shared,

The other cool thing is that we're, our goal is to help students get through and transfer in

two years, so they take full-time units, we provide them field trips to universities,

workshops, meetings with peer mentors and a success coach, which is a graduate student

from a counseling program and financial aid support. It's like a one stop shop for

students, predominantly students of color, but not always.

The purpose of the program is to advance education for students of color and champion equity.

John helps students of color recognize their educational abilities and pursue their education.

John has also completed his doctorate in educational leadership. At several points

throughout the sharing of his story, John noted the importance of obtaining his doctorate. John's

doctoral classes provided knowledge that coupled with his professional roles, changed his

worldview about working with students. John shared about a particular class focused on

communication for K-12 and community college leaders, which introduced concepts of social

justice. This class crystalized the importance of social justice for John, including his desire to

help support marginalized students within systems of power and oppressions. Getting a doctorate was a personal achievement – one that John realized could also help him access different career opportunities as a person of color. John's educational identity is also about showing other students of color that a terminal degree is within their reach. During the third week of work in his current position, a counselor introduced John to a student. Initially John introduced himself to the student by his first name. The counselor corrected John and told the student, this is "Dr. J." John realized the counselor was showing respect, but more importantly the counselor was acknowledging the importance of pursuing education to the student of color.

Working with Students of Color

John described his approach to working with students of color as individualistic. He recognizes there is not one approach that works for all, he takes the time to get to know students,

> I'm always going to our center asking our students, tell me about, most of the time if I
> ask how their day is going, they say great and I ask them to tell me about their favorite
> class, or their not so favorite class, so I ask a lot of open-ended questions beyond the 'how
> is your day going' and to get some feedback.

One-to-one student engagement allows John to become acquainted with students in the program and to learn about their experiences, which for some students includes financial struggles. As John recalled, financial challenges are not where students need the most support,

> but I think they love that someone they can talk to because home is shitty, or a hectic life
> for them. So, this is a lot of times their escape, not only from their home environment, but
> escape to hopefully higher levels, areas of access, of qualities of life.

Relationships and time with students are John's primary approach with students of color.

Working predominantly with students of color, the environment of the institution is usually the first time where students in the program are in a predominantly White environment. John works to help these students understand the experience, "the reactions range from anywhere like, 'oh, it's whatever, I'll deal with it', it's not a big deal, to I'm only comfortable staying in our student center." Some of these students are also experiencing a tumultuous home life, which encourages John to offer care and compassion, motivating students to further their education.

John also shared his identity as an important aspect of his approach. Identifying as a person of color informs John's approach and allows him to relate to students of color in ways that a White staff member may be unable,

> For one, being an individual, or person of color definitely helps provide me with some ways that I can reach out and relate to students and building that rapport and share similar experiences as a person of color in a predominantly White environment, or predominantly environment that is different than my own and having different experiences.

In addition to identifying as a person of color, John also identifies as gay, which has allowed him to connect with some students of color who share this identity. John also discloses his sexual orientation as a gay man to the students he works with, "For those students, it helps them feel a lot more comfortable that there is someone in this position who has influence." Disclosing his identities allows John to show students they can make it too, that there is someone with similar identities who supports them. While vulnerability is not easy, it provides John with a tool to connect with students of color. John seeks to relate with students around shared identities, to create a connection to help students explore their identities further.

A Heartfelt Thank You

John selected a thank you card as his artifact (Figure 4). John received the card from a

former student while serving as a coordinator for a peer mentoring and first-year experience

program. As part of this program, John supervised nearly 55 student peer mentors. The peer

mentors participate in a comprehensive training program. During John's tenure with the

program, he sought to make the group as diverse as possible, reaching out to various groups to

include more diverse students and perspectives.
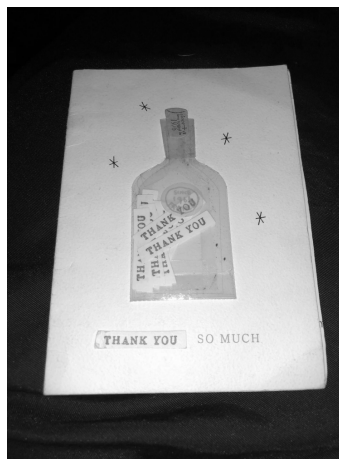
Figure 5: An image of the thank you card presented to John by one of his former student staff.

John shared about the peer advisor recruitment process and one student who barely

advanced through the interview process. The student performed poorly during the process, but

shared a response that caught John's attention and was eventually hired. At the end of the

summer this student gave John a thank you card, which caught him off guard. The gratitude the

student expressed was emotional and rewarding. The thank you helped John the influence of this

student group,

> I feel like it was almost like it was almost like taking off, let's say you're wearing sun
>
> glasses and you walk into a pretty decent lit room. I'm trying to think about a
>
> metaphor...because my first year was all about trying establish that I was in charge,

establish my presence, and I'm in charge of those who are working for me…and just

listening to students' experiences and stories… just something that was just inspiration.

Along with the knowledge acquired through his doctoral program, working with students in the

mentoring program helped to crystalize the importance of equity and inclusion for John.

Tyra

Tyra identifies as a Black and African American woman. Currently Tyra works in equity

and inclusion at a mid-sized public state institution as the director of a multicultural center.

Tyra's role was a topic of much conversation throughout the study as she found it difficult to

describe her work. Tyra attributed the difficulty to institutional challenges, including being the

only full-time exempt staff in the center, performing numerous additional responsibilities, and

her desire to excel in her work. It was evident that Tyra went above and beyond to support the

students of color while also advancing equity and diversity.

Student Affairs Story

A hallmark of Tyra's story was knowing student affairs was the "right" path, even if the

details were fuzzy. As an undergraduate student Tyra changed her major three times, eventually

landing on English, thinking she would become an English professor. She was also involved in

student organizations and an honors fraternity. Tyra decided to pursue student affairs after

asking questions of other professionals, "I guess I just asked someone what degree they got

because I really have no idea how this worked out. So…I got my degree in adult and higher

education." Tyra pursued her master's degree with an assistantship in student activities.

Tyra's reflection about her graduate experiences included an important critique. Tyra's

master's program was not a "meaningful" experience, with minimal connection between

coursework and working with students of color. In Tyra's opinion "doing the work" was more

educational than sitting in a classroom, interacting with texts, or having conversation about theories. Getting a master's degree was a necessary step, as Tyra shared, "I don't know that I was in a program that was really preparing me for student affairs work. It was here is the program, take the classes, get the degree." While her master's program provided the "required" credential for student affairs work, much of Tyra's learning came from doing the work,

> So, I don't know that aside from having the credential, I really don't know how much the actual in-class learning contributed to who I am today. It was really a lot of trial and error and me engaging with people and learning from people with whom I worked that helped me become who I am...

Learning how to work with students of color came from gaining experience first-hand.

Tyra's experiences were pieces of a larger puzzle that were not intentional, but fit together perfectly. Tyra did not have a direct or deliberate path into student affairs, she shared, "I can't think of anything else that would better suit my energy and experience, skills, and desire to support students in the way that I do." Student affairs feels like the "right" place for Tyra.

Working with Students of Color

Tyra goes above and beyond for students in her multicultural center director role. As I listened to her experiences, it became clear that Tyra provides a high level of care for students,

> I don't say no to the Black students I serve. You know, I had a student come to me and ask for a letter of recommendation, and I'm like, I don't really know what I'd write, but I will figure something out.

Some of Tyra's students have complex or strained relationships with their families, which affects their connections with other people or areas of the institution. As a result, students see Tyra as a mother figure calling her "Mom." In this role, Tyra asks her students if they have eaten, if

they're drinking enough water, if they're getting enough sleep, and taking care of themselves. Tyra's support of students in this capacity provides care, but also adds a layer of exhaustion. Other colleagues, especially White colleagues, are not providing similar support, which provides one example of how race influences Tyra's work. Tyra described taking on a mother role with her students as a Black woman, ensuring her students' basic needs are met, noting her male colleagues are rarely tasked in the same way.

Tyra pursues excellence in her work to ensure students have positive experiences. The institution has increased efforts to recruit more students of color without increased resources to support these students when they arrive at the institution. Admitting more students of color looks good for the institution, but without increase in staff and faculty of color, there are not enough people of color to engage with these students. Tyra described the institution's approach as a "perpetual cycle." The institution admits more students of color without more staff and faculty of color. As a result, students of color are not creating connections on campus and do not stay on campus on weekends.

Celebrating Diversity

Tyra selected a photo album from the multicultural center's 35th founding anniversary as her artifact (Figure 5). The celebration highlighted students and their experiences, in diverse ways. The event included recitals of poetry about Ethiopia and a performance of Christian hymns celebrating the center and the culture of the students who have experienced the center. During the event, three of Tyra's student staff spoke about her sharing about high expectations and the amount of care that she provided to them daily. Tyra's care helped these three students feel a sense of family and provided a reminder she is doing good and important work. While Tyra cannot influence all students, she can influence some students in profound ways.

Figure 6: An image from an electronic photo album celebrating the 35th anniversary of the center that Tyra directs at her institution.

The photo album represents resistance against predominant and pervasive White institutional culture for Tyra. From her perspective, the institution does not prioritize her work,

> No. So, I say this with as much humility as I can muster. I feel like a unicorn at this place. I feel like the way that I engage and the way I plan and execute things is not standard for the university. I don't think, I think they're probably really proud to be able to use some of the things that I do to highlight what happens at the university, but it's not standard, it's not part of culture to operate in those ways.

Tyra mentioned that her work is not "standard." Instead of doing a minimal effort, Tyra pursues excellence in her work to provide an experience that students can be proud of despite the institutional culture. Her focus is not about her or the job she is doing, but rather it's about the experience that she is working to create for her students of color within the institution.

Barriers to Excellence

Earlier I shared that Tyra strives for excellence in her work. Tyra goes above and beyond while she perceives some within the institution as being okay with mediocre. Tyra described being insufficiently supported to perform at her desired level. One of the barriers is the "fear" of doing what's necessary for students of color because of what could happen, as she noted,

There's definitely a culture of fear around supporting students and really faculty, everybody at the university in ways that they probably should because they're afraid of what could come out in the news, they're afraid of lawsuits, and that ends up hindering all kinds of positive progress that I think could be happening to help students feel safe.

The culture of fear prevents Tyra and other professionals in the institution from helping students to feel safe and supported. Being fearful of media attention or litigation causes institutional leaders to prioritize institutional image over the needs of students and students of color. As Tyra described, emphasizing the institutional image and external relations subverts the needs of students of color.

In addition to the culture of fear, Tyra also mentioned a lack of supervisor support which exacerbated her challenges as a multicultural center director,

I don't know that what I perceive as support is happening for me, yeah. I imagine that if I truly figured out what those things could be and asked for them, I think they would be heard, but I don't know that folks have the capacity to give me what I really need, to feel supported and to feel like I'm being developed in the ways that I want.

The support that Tyra received was described as surface level, focusing on telling her about the great things she is doing, rather than asking thoughtful questions to consider how to improve an event or program for students. A source of Tyra's perceived lack of support was her supervisor's inability to separate their previous experiences as a director of a cultural center from their guidance as a supervisor,

Our supervisor was a director for almost 10 years and is stepped in director life…She always said that 'I've done this before and at my previous institution, I did it, so I don't

understand why you can't'. It is extremely demeaning and I understand what she is trying

to communicate…

Additionally, Tyra described having to develop her how support to ensure she received the

support needed to perform her duties and responsibilities and because it was absent from her

direct supervisor. If Tyra did not seek out support from colleagues within and outside of the

institution, she would not receive it.

Tyra also mentioned she provides support to other people at her institution, students and

colleagues. Supporting students was a reoccurring focus throughout Tyra's narrative. She works

to ensure her students can survive in the institution and often takes on other work that she knows

will help provide students with a good college experience, like recruiting students of color or

personally paying for food so her students can eat. With limited resources, Tyra often uses her

own money to buy students food,

The resources, for sure, are different. And so when I'm thinking about the things I need

and want to do for my staff, or the students I serve, I'm pinching pennies, like, "Okay,

well can I do this?" There's a lot of food and security here, and I'm paying for food all the

time out of pocket. I don't ever have money because I'm feeding my students.

Tyra's work and desire to pursue excellence is not supported by her supervisor, or the institution,

which intensifies challenges and frustrations. Rather than focusing time on her students, Tyra

has to navigate an unsupportive institutional environment and unsupportive supervisor. She also

is faced with using personal resources to ensure students are supported because she is not

provided with sufficient resources by the institution to support students.

Sean

Sean identifies as a bi-racial, Asian and White man, with his racial and ethnic identity and sexual orientation, as a gay man being the most salient aspects of his identity. Currently, Sean works in residential life and housing, but previously worked in multicultural affairs, with a focus on social justice education. Sean does not directly interact with students currently, but is responsible for several areas that influence students' experience, including living-learning.

Student Affairs Story

Sean discovered student affairs early, deciding to pursue student affairs in his sophomore year of college. During this time, Sean selected his majors and became involved in the multicultural office. Sean also developed a mentoring relationship with the Assistant Director in the multicultural office, who guided him towards student affairs and affirmed his interest in working with students of color.

After completing his undergraduate experience, Sean enrolled in a student affairs graduate program. Sean's master's program included coursework focused on students with a "multicultural" perspective and a counseling focus, which helped Sean consider student's different experiences. While coursework was helpful, Sean provided several critiques about his program,

> I know we did a lot of reading, I know we had weeks dedicated to most, if not all identity groups. I can't say that I retained a lot from that and it, I think that there's often a disconnect between theory to practice, we can talk about these theories, but I don't think that actually prepared me to work with these students, necessarily.

As Sean progressed through his career, he continued to place a higher emphasis on work experiences.

Sean's involvement with the multicultural office as an undergrad inspired him to pursue multicultural affairs; however, Sean's first full time role was a hall director after in residential life. Sean's interest in multicultural work informed his student affairs journey, regardless of working in a multicultural office. When Sean's role was outside of multicultural affairs, he found ways to weave it into his work through additional assignments.

Working with Students of Color

After working in residential life, Sean started his Ph.D. with an assistantship in the multicultural center focusing on social justice education, which later turned into a full-time role. In this role, Sean commonly presented to fraternities and sororities, composed of largely White members, which had an important ripple effect for students of color. Sean described the importance of doing social justice work with individuals who may perpetuate stereotypes or microaggressions against students of color. Approaching race, and other equity, diversity, and inclusion topics with students from privileged backgrounds can shift behavior and is one example of how Sean worked to support students of color.

Sean interacted frequently with students of color in formal and informal roles within the multicultural center. His interactions were often with Asian Pacific Islander and Desi-American (APIDA) students because of his identity, as half-Chinese. APIDA students sought Sean out for different roles, including serving as a student organization advisor and facilitating presentations. Sean's bi-racial identity was intriguing in this context because he does not always believe his bi-racial identity is apparent, or that other see him as a person of color. Students generally noticed this identity, or would ask, but it influenced his interactions with other individuals and his activity with APIDA students and initiatives.

An element of Sean's approach with students of color is disclosing his identity as a person of color. In APIDA spaces, Sean makes his shared identity known, providing students with a staff person who students can relate to and discuss shared experiences as he shared,

> So, I think really that the identities inform how I interact with students all the time because it's me making sure that I am visible as an APIDA person, a person of color, as a multiracial person and being that voice for them and ally to them.

Sean named apprehension about his racial identity and the complexity of participating in APIDA spaces as someone who is also White. A large focus of Sean's approach is letting students know he is a person of color and naming his person of color identity, as well as sharing about his experiences from a multiracial perspective. Sean's disclosure of his identities helps provide APIDA students and other students of color with an institutional ally.

Doing Something for Others

Sean's selected a postcard with a Martin Luther King Jr. quote as his artifact (Figure 3). The quote on the postcard was, "Life's most urgent question is what are you doing for others?" Sean acquired the postcard in the Netherlands during a semester abroad program. He described seeing the quote previously, but finding the postcard during the program felt. The words of the quote also struck a chord with Sean, and his work with students of color. The quote has become a continual question in his life and work as a student affairs professional, "Yeah, so I think it informs my work in student affairs and with students of color because it is that question of what are you doing for others."
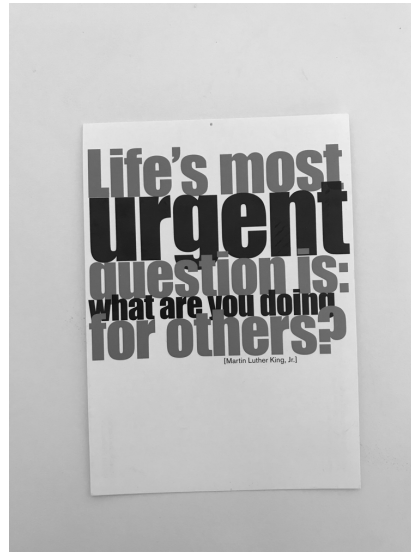
Figure 7: A photo of the Martin Luther King quote referenced by Sean for his artifact.

An additional dimension of the artifact was others perception of Sean. He shared that colleagues, friends, and his partner describe him as selfless,

I am often told that, by other colleagues, by my partner, by everyone that I am very

selfless and I think this is a question that even though I don't necessarily look at that

quote and reflect on it every day, but it does inform a lot of my philosophy in student

affairs and how I am helping students succeed, how I am helping them grow, how I am

dealing with their issues in the residence halls, how I am advising them in student

organizations.

The perception of Sean as selfless reflects his embodiment of the quote. Sean approaches

working with students of color from a place of helping them to succeed, encouraging their

growth, and working to help students respond to relevant issues. The quote helps Sean champion

social justice and advocate for student spaces within campus environments, "and with students of

color and just kind of thinking about justice, social justice for students and the issues that they

are grappling with and fighting for the spaces they need, the representation they need and desire

on campus." Sean's acknowledgement of his identities and his fight for queer students, queer students of color, students of color, and APIDA students represent the quote in his work.

Sean brings awareness of social justice issues to students, to fight for equity and inclusion. Sean also uses conversation and facilitation, to foster understanding of racism and systems of power and oppression. Sean also challenges and critiques colleagues to champion social justice and more inclusive environments.

Brenda

Brenda is a bi-racial, White and Hispanic, woman; however, she identifies as White, versus bi-racial. Her identity as a Christian is also salient. Brenda works at a mid-sized private research institution in orientation and student transition programs. In her role, Brenda works closely with a team of eight orientation captains, who provide peer leadership to a group of nearly 100 orientation leaders who transition incoming students into the institution. While Brenda is bi-racial her identification as a White woman heavily influenced her narrative. Identifying as White provided Brenda with privilege in certain spaces, while creating challenges in other spaces. Throughout Brenda's narratives she had a keen awareness of her racial identity and how this aspect of her identity influences her understanding of working with students of color.

Student Affairs Story

Brenda's student affairs story took shape through her undergraduate involvement in fraternity and sorority life, student government, and spending a lot of time in the student activities office. Brenda recognized staff members were providing her with a high degree of support and there was a name for their profession: student affairs. Brenda enjoyed being

involved and felt that she could also engage in this work and support students as they navigated their own experiences.

Brenda pursued a graduate degree to prepare for student affairs work. Brenda's selection of student affairs aligned with her desire to make a difference in the lives and experiences of other people. Brenda's master's program solidified her interest in student affairs and provided a foundation to engage in student affairs work. Brenda felt prepared to work with students of color and shape inclusive environments after her master's program. The multicultural class in Brenda's program was an important piece of her preparation. Brenda grew up in a predominantly White and homogeneous area and attended a predominantly White institution. This class exposed Brenda to other identities and social justice, including learning terminology and understanding of oppression, power, and privilege. Course material was informative; however, Brenda attributed her education to relationships with peers. Hearing the stories and experiences of her peers brought various identities and experiences with discrimination to life.

Brenda's identities are an important part of her student affairs story. In the first interview Brenda explored how she presents as a White woman in spaces with students of color. Brenda described the complicated nature of her identity. In spaces where others perceive her as White, she holds privilege, but if others perceive her as Latina, she could experience different treatment. Identifying as White has caused Brenda to be aware of her identity and the identities of those around her,

> So, especially when I'm in spaces with students of color, or anyone of color, where being
> very aware of the space that I am taking up. Like, how much am I talking, how much am
> I allowing others to voice their opinion, how much am I agreeing or disagreeing with the

person that I'm with within the space and being very aware of the dynamics in the space

as it relates to that.

Brenda's experiences with her own identity informs her work, making her more aware of

students' identities. Brenda also approaches her work with an appreciation for students'

identities, ensuring she acknowledges their identities.

Working with Students of Color

Brenda's approach to working with students of color involves interacting with students of

color outside of her position. For example, Brenda welcomes and interacts with students who

wander into the office seeking to become involved. She also greets and engages students in

conversation who visit the office to ask about their student organization, or as student leaders

with the programming board or student government. Through each of these opportunities,

Brenda has developed relationships with students from a variety of backgrounds and

perspectives. Brenda also described working closely with orientation and recruiting orientation

captains and leaders who represent the students within the institution. During the time of her

interview, new staff were recently selected, with four students of color among the eight captains.

Brenda brings awareness to her work, focusing on appreciating students' identities. She

is mindful not to make assumptions or to discredit a student when the student says "this is who I

am." Brenda also incorporates awareness of her own identity into interactions, "I am extremely

mindful when they don't share my identity. It's the way that I really try to demonstrate empathy

and care for people and students marginalized in different ways and that's trying to encourage

and demonstrate love…" With this approach, Brenda recognizes and values the identities and

experiences of her students, by never assuming how they identify. Some individuals present in

ways that do not align with how they see themselves. Brenda's identity was an example of this

complexity; even though she is bi-racial she identifies as White and is often perceived as White in numerous spaces. There is a duality to Brenda's racial identity that is not always known. Identity is not simple and can be complex. The last few years working with students of color helped Brenda to deepen her appreciation and intentionality for this work. Brenda described a poignant example that summarizes her approach to working with students of color during the height of police brutality that has occurred against persons of color,

> So, say, at the height of the police brutality issue, I mean the height then, we're still kind
> of in the height now. But it's more just a tremendous feeling of hopelessness, really, more
> than anything. Because I can't take off their skin for them. I can't make it different for
> them. I can't change the way that they feel about the things that are happening. And while
> I can seek to make change broadly in the community, whatever social justice issues I
> choose to personally address and tackle in my personal time, just where we're at right
> now, there's that tremendous sadness and despair over some of the things happening in
> the world.

Brenda spoke about recognizing racial influences for her students, an aspect that she cannot change for them. While Brenda cannot change a students' identities, she can advance social justice with the intent of making society and institutions more accepting for all students.

Embracing Social Justice

Brenda selected her participant manual from a social justice retreat as her artifact. The retreat focused on the intersection of identities and Brenda was amongst the first cohort of staff invited to participate in the retreat, as participants. Brenda shared the experience with the retreat was a game-changer for her perspectives about social justice,

It's not that it was new for me, but I feel like it just came together in a new way and to be

able to hear students, and primarily students of color and their experiences in the world as

it relates to all of the oppressive isms that we can think of, racism, sexism and those

things. It was powerful, it was so powerful to hear the experiences of students making so

much of what I had learned about.

The manual is a physical reminder and record of Brenda's increased knowledge and awareness.
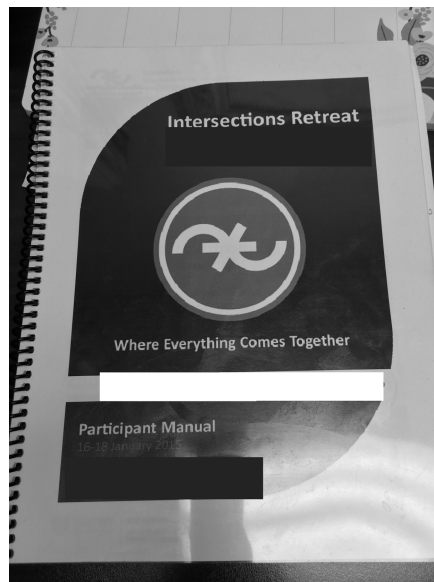
Figure 8: A photo of Brenda's participant manual from the social justice retreat.

The manual represented the knowledge Brenda acquired, which informed her approach

and interactions with students of color. Brenda shared that the retreat provided additional

knowledge, which she cannot unknow. Brenda also shared the manual and retreat experience

informs how she presents herself in various spaces, how she addresses people, and how she

communicates her identity and the identity of others, and how she views her work,

I feel more pressure, more challenged and the, I feel the importance of doing the work

and what I mean by pressure is, you know we really need to be intentional with the

programs and the students we're serving and are we creating spaces that feel

comfortable…

Through her sharing of this approach, Brenda acknowledged that she is still learning. There are

moments in her work and in her doctoral studies where she pauses and considers language, "now

I know and these are the types of things that I would never know and I hope that it makes me just

a little bit more comfortable to be around." Through a willingness to learn and embrace of social

justice, Brenda strives to use her knowledge and make space for others.

Cathy

Cathy identifies as a young, queer, Chicana-Mexican woman of color. Currently, Cathy

works with diversity initiatives and multicultural affairs within a large and comprehensive

residential life and housing department. Cathy oversees two programs: social justice peer

educators and a TRiO, federally funded access, program to support students of migrant families.

At the time of the first interview, Cathy recently transitioned into this role. She formally served

as a coordinator in a multicultural center at her undergraduate institution. Her current position is

also new to the department. The position was elevated from a coordinator to an assistant director

position with more influence in conversations and programmatic direction.

Student Affairs Story

Cathy's student affairs story evolved from her identity as a woman of color. Cathy

connected her story to the experiences of her parents. Cathy is the daughter of two Mexican

parents who grew up on the West-Coast. Both of her parents experienced racial segregation and

discrimination. Cathy's father's name was changed without the consent of his parents, so his

name would sound more English or White. Cathy's mother moved to California from Texas in

the third grade. Living close to the Mexican border, Cathy's mother was able to grow up without

speaking English. Upon arriving in California, she had one academic year to learn English and assimilate. As a result, race and racial justice were present in Cathy's upbringing and in her parent's conversations, even if that was not the language used by her parents. The details of her parent's journey served as poignant background for Cathy's journey and student affairs experiences.

Cathy traced her journey of social justice and identity-based work to reading a book in the seventh grade about a young trans girl. At this time, Cathy did not have the language, but she knew that gender and identity development were important. Cathy also mentioned her three sisters provided a strong female presence in her home,

> I just grew up with this fierceness around my womanhood and my body that I became
> extremely involved in the Vagina Monologues even in high school and in college I was
> so equipped and ready for that critical studies degree, all of which to say my foundation
> is so deeply comfortable in conversations around racial justice and gender justice.

The foundation for Cathy's entry into student affairs was set. Race, gender, and identity became connected elements of Cathy's identity at an early age. Her experiences as an undergrad illuminated the path and affirmed her decision to pursue student affairs.

Unsurprisingly, Cathy was not aware of student affairs, until she started a role as a resident assistant (RA). As a RA, Cathy navigated the loss of a resident and targeted instances of harassment. Cathy's student affairs supervisors were a system of support who listened and helped her through these tough moments. In these staff, Cathy saw staff who identified LGBT, who had families, and were stellar at serving students. Their influence led Cathy to consider student affairs as her career. Cathy discovered student affairs early enough as an undergraduate to participate in opportunities that helped prepare her for the work, including summer orientation

and the McNair Scholars program. Cathy completed a summer internship at a large research university. Relationships with mentors and faculty of color shaped Cathy's understanding of student affairs and transformed it into a field that she loves and is now a part of influencing.

Cathy enrolled in a master's program immediately after her undergraduate experience and loved her graduate program. Her program provided access to mentors and faculty members that allowed Cathy to continuing growing as a person and a student affairs professional. While Cathy loved her program, she could not recall aspects of the program, including the curriculum, that directly connected to working with students of color. She also felt her program did not help her White peers help students of color. Cathy noted the inclusion of social justice and discussions around power, privilege, and identity, was helpful, but lacked depth,

> but specifically to support students of color, I don't know that that was very specifically pointed to except for one class that was like a multicultural issues and student affairs course and it was taught by two of my very close mentors, one of which is now my supervisor, actually. That class, the main text was *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and it was a really intense course around reimagining our learning and our advocacy.

Cathy's critique acknowledges an area of graduate preparation which needs greater focus. Courses allowed Cathy and her peers to reimagine advocacy, but it was a challenge for her peers,

> It was really hard for some of my peers and I remember some of my peers would rest on if I had this identity and this student of that identity came into my office, I would just get somebody else, you know, I'll send them to somebody else.

The difficult conversations in this course and the (un)intentional resistance of her peers was a reminder that everyone in the university perpetuates power and systems of oppression. Cathy's

coursework was not a direct source of preparation, but the program provided opportunities for Cathy to shape her learning.

Working with Students of Color

Cathy's approach is rooted in her personal identity as a first-generation college student. She understands the need for students to code-switch, or to shift their vernacular based upon who is in the space with them. She can also understand the complexity of identities that students bring with them into their college experience.

Cathy's investment of time and energy into her students is exhausting; it takes energy to listen and support students of color. Cathy is often one of few people of color available for students to connect with and have a conversation. While the work is intense, interactions with students energizes Cathy to continue doing this work, to advocate for students of color, as she shared, "Hearing students of color, hearing gender non-conforming students of color constantly all day gave me the kind of energy to do advocacy work in difficult meetings." Several times Cathy uttered the phrase "move mountains," which encompassed her approach of support. Hearing students' experiences and their struggles encourages and motivates Cathy to voice their needs and to push forward change that will move barriers out of the way. Working with students and students of color is a source of energy for Cathy.

Her work is also about making space for students of color. Cathy's current role allows her to participate in conversations that create and shape policy and resources, ensuring other staff and administrators include the perspective of students of color. Previously, Cathy spent most of her time one-on-one with students providing with them advice,

> I feel like I changed students' lives a little bit more immediately. I think being in an
>
> office with a student, in a classroom with a student, in a center with a student, sitting face

to face, I felt a lot more impactful in the student's bigger life. In the same way that I

pictured, the people that I was interacting with as an undergraduate student, impacting

my life deeply. I didn't see the work that was happening in meetings that was impacting

the resources I was receiving.

Both approaches of directly advising students one-on-one and advocating for them in meetings

are important in working with students of color, but represent two distinctly different methods.

In both approaches, Cathy has used her life experiences to advocate and support differences.

In Community with Women of Color

As Cathy described her artifact, she was vulnerable in sharing its significance. She

described procrastinating submitting a description of the artifact because it is so meaningful.

Part of the hesitation was defining the artifact and summarizing how it related to her work.

Cathy chose a picture frame filled hearts with messages written on them (Figure 8), a gift from a

Women of Color Collected in her first position. The collective was a project in her first

professional role and was a group she spent two and a half years growing,

It just taught me so much, I owe so much to one that space of having this institution that I

went to undergrad at and having these women of color come once a week Wednesday, so

much so that they would plan their academic schedules around this to know that there

was this amount of reflection and commitment to this community that hadn't been there

when I was there, felt like there was change.

The collective was an affirming space where Cathy felt trusted to facilitate conversation and

support women of color every Wednesday, in partnership with a staff psychologist from the

counseling office. The collective offered a space for deep listening and questioning. Cathy

explained that each of the hears represents the attention and compassion she provided,

I prioritize these voices of beautiful women of color on this predominantly White

campus, their messy coloring and cute messages on this framed thing and it's what I want

to prioritize and I think and I know that and I understand that cognitively…

The individual hearts shown collectively in the frame provide reminders of what is important to

Cathy in her work with students of color.

Figure 9: A photo of the framed messages given to Cathy by former students.

The hearts are also a culmination of work, words of affirmation, and a professional

milestone. Leaving this group was challenging for Cathy. As Cathy shared about the collective

and the artifact, she found herself getting emotional thinking about the last meeting, her students

presenting her with the gift, and how the collective influenced her professional identity.

Cathy described her artifact as a snapshot of her students' love. As a student affairs

professional, Cathy leads with love. She loves her students and believe they love her. Cathy

shows her commitment to her students by approaching the work and her interactions with love,

offering a piece of herself to her students. It also means that she is putting herself into spaces

where she is allowed by her students. Through her love, she is in community with her students, a

part of their joys, their struggles, and their successes. Colleagues may find it uncomfortable or

unprofessional for Cathy to lead with love, but she's unbothered. Using love is how Cathy

actualizes her leadership and how she maintains her ability to keep doing this work. The emotional element makes it challenging, but also worthwhile.

Michelle

Michelle identifies as a Black woman and a first-generation student. Michelle currently works with gender and sexuality as the director of a women's center at a state institution in the mid-west. In her role, Michelle interacts with students who come into the center seeking resources about sexual violence, as a place for women to feel empowered, and students who just wander into the center. The role allows Michelle to engage and talk with students who enter and utilize the center.

Student Affairs Story

Michelle's student affairs story started with her undergraduate experience at a small private liberal arts institution of less than 2,000 students. Michelle chose the institution because her high school chemistry teacher and mentor attended the institution. Initially Michelle planned to pursue engineering. Michelle shared that after attending a summer-intensive engineering program, she shifted her career aspirations,

> That experience taught me that I did not want to be an engineer and it was more about the campus environment because they made it a point to be very honest with us about what does it mean to be a student, a minority student in a school where there's very high competition and high stress and I just knew, I didn't have the language necessarily, but I just knew that wasn't going to be for me.

Michelle then decided to pursue education to be a high school chemistry teacher. Her experience student teaching would be a game changer, ultimately steering her into student affairs.

Michelle wanted to teach students who had experiences like her experience. Initially Michelle expected the resistance to come from the students; however, she found other teachers in the schools to be overtly negative, "I expected behavioral things, I expected it to be difficult, but the teachers just had such negative attitudes." As an undergraduate, Michelle was involved with the Black Student Union. The advisors of this group asked her to consider a career in student affairs, which would include going to graduate school to get her master's. Trusting his advice, Michelle enrolled in her graduate program to pursue student affairs.

Following her undergraduate experience, Michelle pursued her masters' in student affairs. She described her program as having a sense of energy and excitement, which allowed her to learn about student affairs and understand the nature of student affairs work. During her master's program, Michelle held an assistantship at a small private institution, which was a poignant element of her graduate experience. The institution was transitioning from a junior college to a four-year institution with a student population of around 600 and a goal of increasing to 1,000 students. Working at this small institution helped Michelle to understand issues students of color face around access and persistence.

Michelle's assistantship involved building a first-year experience program for a student population that did not meet the typical standards of institutions of higher education. The institution labeled these students as low-achieving. Many of the students did not apply beforehand, with some parents applying for their student. Michelle described confronting faculty and administrators who discussed these students from a deficit point of view,

> I remember being in a faculty meeting, because part of my role is to build a first-year
> experience program, I went to faculty meetings once a month. They put me in front of the
> room and asked me what I was going to do about these kids falling class, are you going to

feed them, are you going to stop playing games with them all night, so they can go to

class and be able to function, because you student affairs folks, all you do is keep them

up all night and that's why they can't learn.

Michelle had to operate within an institutional culture that faulted students for not keeping up or

meeting expectations when programs or structures were not provided to support the students. As

a graduate student, Michelle had to make her voice heard and question how institutional leaders

were "okay" with admitting students, but not providing them with resources to be successful.

Michelle's assistantship was instrumental in her preparation. Coursework covered student

populations and allowed Michelle to learn more about their experiences; however, a majority of

her learning was "self-directed."

Working with Students of Color

As director of a women's center, Michelle provides a space for women students. Within

this space, Michelle engages students in conversations to learn more about the programs of the

center, and their experiences. Michelle described programming through the center to empower

women and femme identified students, as well as helping to educate all students and the entire

campus community about relevant issues,

Having those conversations, whether that's one-on-one through formalized programming,

or even now me helping other students in terms of writing their dissertation and going to

graduate school, I'm always saying, "Be bold. Your experience is knowledge, it's a

legitimate form of knowing. Be bold in that you know that, your expertise in that, and

don't let other people tell you it's not possible.

Regardless of the activity, Michelle advocates for students to be themselves, to view their

experiences as important and valid.

Michelle centers her experiences and her perspectives in her work. This centering includes integration of her identities and identity development as part of her approach with students of color,

> how I show up in the world is deeply rooted in me being a black woman and so, even how I do my work in student affairs, my praxis or the way that I combine theory into action is deeply rooted in being a Black woman, it's deeply rooted in Black woman feminism.

Michelle's identity as a Black woman directing a women's center and her racial identity are inseparable from her work with students of color and as a student affairs professional, "So, that comes out in terms of how I work with students or just do my work in general of, we all have a unique location in the world that impacts how we show up." Michelle's identities offer her a unique worldview, that allows her to engage students in conversations where they "define" themselves, sharing their story with her.

Michelle focuses her work on students, but not necessary with students. As a director, Michelle is in conversations and spaces advocating for students, naming challenges, and advocating for resources that will help support students. In her words, "I feel like I'm doing the work that I was hired to do, which is advocating for students, or advocating for change." As Michelle was explaining her work with students of color, she also referred to the importance of intersectionality. Intersectionality informs Michelle's interactions with students of color and the advocacy that she does on their behalf. While intersectionality may be a buzzword in higher education, Michelle commented about the importance of thinking how to utilize intersectionality in her work,

really challenging what is your definition of intersectionality and if you really believe

that and if you truly want to center the whole person, that would also show up in how you

teach your classes and who you hire and which students you give leadership positions.

As the women's center director, Michelle was upfront in acknowledging an assumption that she

speaks for all women. A result of this assumption is continually educating members of the

institutional community about the importance and need for a women's center, regardless of

whether they are the largest population of students. Michelle's work is about advocacy and

helping others to understand their needs and why they deserve a seat at the table.

Daring to Be…

Michelle selected an Audre Lorde quote as her artifact (Figure 9). The quote read, "when

I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in service of my vision, then it becomes less and less

important if I am afraid." When Michelle unpacked the meaning of the quote, she described a

lost feeling of safety that she experienced when she was a student. As an administrator, Michelle

is acutely aware that her position does not come with a guarantee of permanence. She described

the quote as providing her with daily inspiration and motivation to fully participate in the work,

So, it's something that I look at almost on a daily basis to keep going in my work and

working with students, to continue to speak up, to not be sad in the spaces where I need

to be heard the most.

The quote also represents Michelle's educational journey and persistence. When peers and

former educators communicated a lack of encouragement or doubt, Michelle pushed forward,

I do think for someone like me who comes from a working-class background, comes

from the inner-city, who has all these messages from media and all these people telling

me that pretty much you're doomed because you come from where you come from, I saw,

I always saw education as my way out, quote un quote.

Through her own willingness to be "daring," Michelle helps students of color continue their

education. An example of Michelle being daring occurred during her master's program

assistantship. During a faculty meeting, Michelle spoke to the group about why students were

failing classes and she had to ask hard questions, telling faculty and administrators they needed

to do more to support these students. In that instance she spoke and dared to be powerful

because it was in support of students who needed the institution to support them.
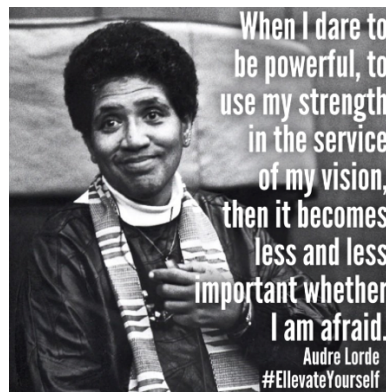
Figure 10: An image of an Audre Lorde quote Michelle referenced as her artifact.

Students may not be in a place to advocate for themselves, as was the case for students

Michelle worked with in her assistantship. Many of the students needed remedial courses due to

their low GPA and test scores, but they would not receive credit for these courses. The

institution also did not have a cafeteria or health services. Embracing a willingness to be

"daring" Michelle speaks up for students and advocates for their experiences.

Findings and Themes

In this section, I present the themes that emerged through the participants' stories. I

present themes and concepts in a broad sense, providing a snapshot of participant stories to

describe their experiences and work with students of color. All participants had distinctly

different stories, with similar elements woven into each story. The participants pursued student affairs through involvement and supporting relationships, with many participants describing individuals who mentored and encouraged them into student affairs. Participants also enjoyed working with people and helping students have a positive undergraduate experience.

I begin my exploration of the themes by centering race across the narratives. As a study based upon the racialized experiences of students in higher education, it was important to begin with describing the influence of race on the participants. I also explicitly describe how race influenced the participants' work with students of color, since the purpose of this study was to explore their perspective about working with students of color. It is important to note the findings are the result of the participant narratives, with eight of the nine participants identifying as people of color (Table 1). I start with the significance of race, leading into institutional culture, which informs the challenges of working with students of color and how the participants' approach to working with students of color. Discussion of the participants' student affairs preparation and supporting relationships conclude the findings.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Name	Salient Identities	Current Functional Area	Student Affairs Experience Level
Brenda	White, Christian, Woman	Leadership & Transition/Orientation	Mid-Level
Cathy	Queer, Chicana-Mexican woman	Multicultural affairs within Residential Life & Housing	New Professional
John	Filipino American man, first-generation, gay	Educational equity and support	Mid-Level
Larry	Chinese man	Career Services	Mid-Level
Michelle	Black woman, first-generation	Women's Center	Mid-Level
Ryan	Straight, cisgender, middle-class, Black man	Social Justice/ Multicultural Affairs	Mid-Level
Sean	Bi-racial, Asian and White, man	Residential Life & Housing	Mid-Level
Tyra	Black and African American, woman	Multicultural Affairs	Mid-Level
Tamara	Upper-middle class cisgender Black, woman	Student Leadership	Mid-Level

Significance of Race

Race and racism were present throughout the participants' narratives, including their student affairs stories and work with students of color. Each participant explored the influence of race on their identity development, describing the intersections of race with their other identities, and how they approach student affairs work with students of color. The participants' narratives revealed race and racism as prominent elements of institutional structures, which made their work difficult, while oppressing students in subtle and overt ways. For example, Ryan discussed experiencing a "race tax" in his first professional role. This tax included the

propensity of institutional leaders to select people of color for work with students of color.

Michelle noted the role of race in her work as a women's center director,

> So, I personally believe race is at the center at everything. Critical race theory is the
>
> philosophy of life. So, I want to name that, to say that I see it everywhere, all the places,
>
> in the culture of the institution that I am at now.

Race and racism were persisting undertones throughout each narrative. In some instances, race

helped participants understand their identity, as was the case for Cathy, and in others it added

layers of challenge, including a lack of financial resources, echoed by most if not all participants.

Race shaped the participants' professional experiences, perception of their own identity, and how

they choose to interact and work with students of color. The narratives of the participants

present similar and unique approaches tow working with students of color.

Participants' race and identity. Eight of the nine participants identified as people of

color with all participants sharing a keen understanding of how race informs their identities. The

participants' stories included personal racial discrimination, an awareness of being different, and

details of navigating institutional spaces. For example, Sean disclosed and explored how his

racial identity influences his work with students of color, "but in the back of my head, there's

always the question of do I fit in because I don't look like everyone else. So, I think the way that

it informs how I interact with students." As a bi-racial person, Sean navigates interactions with

students of color, who at times may not see him as a person of color.

Brenda was the only White identifying participant in this study. Following participation

in a social justice retreat, she described an enhanced perspective of race and difference, which

elevated perspective of her own racial identity and work with students of color. In spaces with

students and people of color, Brenda is mindful of how much she talks and how she encourages

others to share their opinion. Brenda's awareness allows her to monitor her behavior and focus on the students and people of color around her. Cathy's identities have influenced her interest in race, social justice, and equity. Her parents' experiences with racial desegregation and discrimination made Cathy aware of her own identity at an early age,

> As a child, my parents always saw racial justice conversations, they didn't call it racial justice…but they saw conversations around injustice and violence... So, if I were to get in trouble in school, they wanted to know the race and gender of the teacher and I learned that as a normal thing. My parents were active voters, so I remember not just every four years, but as often as possible, them spending a whole evening looking through voter information and ballots on the kitchen table and me sitting along wanting to ask questions and not knowing much about it. That deeply influenced my idea of social justice and racial justice.

Participants' awareness of their identities equipped them to understand their experiences more deeply and recognize the influence of race in work with students of color. As a multicultural center director, Tyra's identity forms a unique intersection between identity, race, and her work,

> I often think about what it means to be a Black woman, as a cultural center director, supporting Black students. There are some things that I am expected to do and ways that I'm expected to navigate the university culture that I don't think some of my colleagues are, particularly those who identify as White and/or male.

In every narrative, participants' understanding of their identities allowed them to name the influence of race on their position, their education, and the students they work with daily.

> With awareness of their racial and salient identities, participants worked to ensure others recognized their identities and how they approached student affairs work. Michelle shared being

deliberate in how others describe her, "In my bios I try to be clear that I am a Black woman and as a result the way that I do my work, who I am, how I show up in the world is deeply in me being a Black woman..." Race is inseparable from the participants' work with students of color. Participants' understanding of their racial identity helped them understand the difficulties of being a person of color.

Several of the participants described their identity development as "doing the work," understanding their own identities before attempting to help students understand their identities. One of Michelle's comments underscored the importance of this approach, "…you will cause way more damage and harm if you don't do that part first, if you don't think about who you are…" Even with marginalized identities, each participant possessed immense influence. Accepting feedback, expanding knowledge, seeking to understand, and not expecting others to teach you are all aspects of "doing the work" that have enabled the participants to help students through a similar process. The participants' racial experiences directly translated into their work, informing how they engaged students in conversations about the salience of race.

Race and working with students of color. Knowledge of their racial identities allowed participants to facilitate interactions that incorporated active listening and an acknowledgement of students' experiences navigating racist campus environments. John described an interaction where he took time to get to know a student of color, discussing his racial and gay identities. Ryan focuses his work with students of color on identity awareness, which he described as difficult and offering support students when the university did not, "It was constantly standing in the gap for students as they experienced the woes of a pretty hostile and violent campus, both in the city and at the university." The participants intentionally helped students of color navigate hostile situations and provided support not offered elsewhere.

All participants recognized the importance of including students of color, ensuring their representation in leadership roles and programs. Brenda shared about selecting orientation leaders who represented incoming students and the effect of not including students of color, "You know, if a student of color is rejected, what does that mean to them and is there a cultural something behind that?" Brenda acknowledged as "someone that has responsibilities" it is important for her to include students of color. Brenda's sentiment is more than accepting students of color, it is about embracing a critical lens, questioning decisions, the sharing of information, and understanding who is providing the information.

Participants were also cognizant of Whiteness and how the institutional culture caused them to be cautious about engaging students of color. During his narrative, Sean shared an experience where administrators encouraged caution,

> he and his colleagues were encouraged by administrators to be cautious,
>
> we were often reminded that we are a large flagship public institution, with lots of donors and alumni who are mostly White and probably conservative, probably mostly from the state and so, that was a dynamic that we had to be okay with and I understood why messages had to be the way that they were, but it was still frustrating.

While cautious, the participants embraced and confronted race, sharing how institutions inhibited and oppressed students of color through race.

Institutional Culture

Institutional policies, procedures, practices, and history constrained the experiences of the participants in this study. The participants shared moments of tension with the institution, including dismissive and prohibitive institutional culture and norms. Participants made it clear that institutional culture and a lack of supportive leadership were large inhibitors in their work.

Many of the participants spoke about their institution's willingness to admit students of color without increased resources to support those students and their experience. Tyra spoke about the challenges with admitting more students of color. Without more faculty and staff of color within her institution, there were not individuals who could connect with the students, which intensified the number of students traveling home on the weekends. Rather than addressing the root causes of inequity for students and people of color, institutions sought to increase diversity by admitting more students.

Lack of institutional support. Participants explored a lack of institutional support in different ways, with unique perspective about why they did not feel supported. Perspectives ranged from a propensity to rely on people of color to support students of color without compensation, to limiting decision making to higher paid administrators. Ryan affirmed this sentiment, "And it's often behind closed doors, in ways that don't get rewarded, don't get seen, don't get credited. Then that's time that they don't get to work on the things that people do notice, and then they critique that, right?" Rather than providing resources to support students of color, added layers of process and expectation made their work more difficult.

The recruitment and onboarding of new staff to the institution was another area lacking institutional support. Brenda commented on this process, noting that institutions rely on graduate preparation programs to provide essential knowledge, skills, and abilities. When a new professional arrives on campus, institutional leaders assume they will work well with students. When Brenda reflected on her experiences, she noted minimal efforts to acclimate professionals,

> I don't think institutions do well enough to prepare their staff. What are institutions doing
> for professionals once they arrive into a new role. If they have a master's degree, do we
> just assume they have the skills and experiences that are needed?

Hiring practices and recruitment methods often go without follow-up or conversation. Many institutions recruit individuals with a master's degree in student affairs, assuming they are fully prepared to work with students of color. This is not always the case. Depending upon institutional culture, new professionals may arrive without the necessary support.

The absence of institutional support was evident through a lack of acknowledgement and insufficient space on campus. Ryan recalled a controlled and "stuffy" feeling following a campus incident where senior leaders ignored the voices of staff. Michelle complicated this feeling with an unspoken realization, the university does not guarantee continuation in her role as an administrator. The institution can replace staff at any minute. This perspective can stifle voice of individuals who exist on campus to advocate, support, and liberate students of color. Stifling staff only intensifies perceptions of insufficient support. Sean shared an incident during his tenure in the multicultural center at a former institution where senior leaders contradicted the actions of a staff member within center,

> we were asked as an office to be, without using the word, they didn't use the word, but
> they were basically asking us to be neutral on issues of social justice and to make sure
> that we are presenting one perspective on different issues.

Language matters and informs the institutional culture (Museus, Ravello, & Vega, 2012). It may not be obvious to students or the institutional community, but instances like the one Sean shared foster an unwelcoming environment where students of color do not feel connected in meaningful or important ways and go home during many weekends of the semester.

Institutional leadership. Several of the participants noted a perceived lack of leadership within their institutions, which was expressed through hesitation to name racism and staff who were unable decision-making. This lack of leadership influenced the participants' approach to

working with students of color. John was one of the participants who voiced a disconnect noting students rarely interact with senior leaders, "I don't think [students have] been exposed to very in person and face to face interactions with senior leadership administration…" The perceived lack of leadership also influenced decision-making. When speaking about his ability to advance diversity, Larry described his limited influence, "…but in terms of institutionally, above my pay-grade level I guess. I think often times, even though my title is Senior Assistant Director, these decisions don't funnel down to me..." Larry and other participants observed senior leaders as the decision-makers. The participants were rarely the decision-makers.

It was also rare for senior leaders to look like the students of their institutions. Racial, ethnic and gender Diversity of senior leaders was low and unrepresentative of current student demographic trends in higher education (Caple, 1998; Cook, 2012). John shared about students' lack of awareness for who administrators are or what they look like.   Many students would not be able to identify a senior leader walking around campus, let alone recognize administrators' diversity. Further problematizing the perception of institutional leadership is the continuation of the same conversations about diversity and inclusion. Larry spoke about a student affairs division meeting with the Provost who was new to her role. The Provost noted having the same conversations about the diversity of the faculty since starting at the institution in 1993, with the same types of conversation taking place in 2018. If this diversity is an important area of focus, why is the top-level administration still filled with mostly White-looking leaders? Institutional leadership is a representation of institutional culture. A prominence of White administrators communicates a lack of sensitivity or support for students of color. The presence of an administrator of color is also not the sole answer, as Sean,

…the President would have these meetings with students of color and it felt like we

needed to make, we were in charge of sending students there and so, it felt like we

needed to make sure there was one from each group, or he would maybe once a semester

or once a year do his check-in with the Asian students, his check-in with the Native

American students, which interesting because he's a Black man too.

The interactions with students of color in Sean's example felt forced and contrived. In place of

genuine relationships with students of color, the President gave the perception of fulfilling

necessary quotas. The participant's experience affirm that institutional leaders should not only

reflect the identities of their students, but also engage them.

Institutional leaders are responsible for ensuring staff can do their jobs. Some

participants shared instances of leaders subduing incidents to maintain a positive image. Sean

recounted a situation where an office colleague facilitated a workshop, defining racism as being

associated with Whiteness. Rather than supporting the staff member, the President's Office

denounced the actions of the staff member. The most senior leader of the organization not only

disavowed support for the staff member, but also communicated a lack of support for students

and people of color by denying racism and the systemic structures that allow racism to persist.

Tamara acknowledged she does not perceive institutions truly value diversity. Diversity

provides a talking point for leaders and the institution, but without true support it remains a

talking point. Perceived lack of institutional leadership was one challenge participants

recounted.

The Challenges of Working with Students of Color in Student Affairs

Challenging circumstances were a reoccurring theme for the participants, with each situation adding layers of complexity to the participants' work. Sean described the challenge of working with students who experienced microaggressions and a lack of space for these students,

Definitely the microaggressions…the daily experiences of comments being made or being excluded or not having a space for them...White students don't understand how students of color have to navigate the world of the school in different ways.

Acknowledging the occurrence of microaggressions is difficult, especially within historically privileged and exclusive institutional spaces. The participants described a perceived lack of sensitivity from some colleagues who work with students of color, insufficient institutional acknowledgment of students of color, and feeling burdened and exhausted.

All the participants shared their experiences confronting the normalization of racial incidents and the students' experiences with fragility, guilt, and disrupting the normal occurrences of racism. Ryan confronted these challenges through his facilitation of social justice education programs, "I think personally as a Black man doing this type of work, every day I feel that every day I am navigating and designing social justice curriculum that is just at the edge of White fragility." Through facilitation, Ryan provides a space that allows students to embrace and name their identities to understand the complexities of racism and how to dismantle the systems of oppression. Brenda and John intentionally recruited students of color to confront racism while providing incoming students with peers to communicate shared experiences.

Burden and responsibility of working with students of color. Several of the participants described the "burden" of working with students of color. In Ryan's first role, there was an uncertainty about the work with students of color he was being asked to take on, "Just

being challenged to figure out, is this about my professional growth and things that I'm passionate about, or is this work just some added burden and we would often talk about how there is a race tax on campus." The burden resulted from insufficient institutional support, which hindered the ability of the participants to address situations and challenges. Tamara described this burden as a disconnect between espoused and enacted values,

> What does that look like, right? Because even when it comes to implementing it, the burden still goes on to multicultural affairs or diversity offices. Right? It's not truly woven into the entire fabric of the institution. And so, I think that's a huge part of it. Right? It's that you, unless you're a new professional that works within diversity programming or multicultural affairs, you're not going to get that at that component of it.

Working with students of color became an added responsibility for many of the participants, checking in with students to ensure they were eating, sleeping and well.

Engaging students of color in student affairs work can be exhausting. The professionals in this study are "battling" institutional culture with moderate to minimal support, resulting in little time or attention for themselves. Tyra described this as working beyond capacity, "It's just there are layers to the work that are complicated and we're often under-resourced." These individuals are tasked with a lot of work, but no additional resources, exhausting their energy. Brenda described exhaustion through her awareness of the challenges people of color face,

> It's exhausting. I mean, there's very little more that needs to be said. It's so exhausting and so depressing, sometimes, just ... You can't go back from unseeing the horrors and the oppression is horrific, and it is just so hard to know that we live in a world where that is real, and where, in this country it's very real, and that the people that I care about, especially students, walk into the world not just being so valued and loved.

This work tends to fall on passionate professionals, who are willing to invest their time and energy. Quite often those professionals are people of color, which creates pressure for staff of color to engage in the work and adds to the large turnover of student affairs professionals (Dickerson, Hoffman, Anan, Brown, Vong, & Bresciani, 2011). Brenda felt greater pressure as she realized the importance of her work with students of color. Participants pushed through the exhaustion to create spaces where students could feel comfortable and included.

Lacking power and privilege as a student affairs professional. Each of the participants experienced an absence of power and privilege through receiving additional work and being tasked by colleagues and senior leaders to serve students of color. Power is a complex ideal that benefits a small few, while causing inequality for many through daily behaviors, societal structures, and microaggressions (Brookfiled, 2014; Dill & Zambrana, 2009). Privilege is an advantage that provides access to information and resources, gained through one group's dominance over all other groups (Goodman, 2012). Each of the participants shared examples of personally feeling a lack of power and privilege in their roles and through their identities. The absence of power and privilege for people of color also provided numerous examples that created challenging experiences for students of color. For example, Sean shared about the imbedded nature of power and privilege within institutions and how students of color are negatively affected,

> …the spaces aren't built for them. I think a lot more schools are trying to center that and think about that and that's why certain offices exist but when you think about the history of institutions they weren't built to have students of color there. And they were excluded and women were excluded, every group was excluded.

Power and privilege availed themselves through institutional culture and institutional structures. Ryan described the university president utilizing their positional power to minimize the focus of major racial incidents by promoting positive events and images of diversity. Another example showed up in Tyra's story, specifically her desire to be excellent and to ensure students have positive experiences. Her colleagues, including White male colleagues, often make rude remarks about her high-achieving nature, and it making others look bad,

> And I've had people say, "You're the standard." That doesn't feel good either. I don't
>
> wanna be the standard. I want everyone to be the standard. I don't want there to be
>
> expectation all the time that I am operating at this high level, and that it seems like I'm
>
> okay.

Tyra's White colleagues sought to use their racial power to demean and devalue her work. Other participants experienced a lack of power and privilege through students and colleagues who did not understand the dynamics of race or intersectionality. For example, Cathy shared about confronting the supervisor of a colleague who was making negative comments about the colleague's food and how it smelled.

The participants also described the challenges of power and privilege through the conversations and confrontations that took place in their work. Confronting assumptions and educating members of the institution is a frequent occurrence for the participants. Michelle described the need to complicate conversations and spending time educating others as a common challenge, "Usually the first challenge I receive, being a director of a women's center, is why do we need a women's center?" In other instances, the participants had to be careful of the language they used in their communications. For Sean, he and other colleagues experienced the need to be deliberate in their use of language,

So, not using certain language in the newsletters that we had and newsletters all had to be

checked by the central marketing team. Yeah, so it was not great in terms of thinking

about people who care about social justice and an administration outwardly cares and

verbally cares to the students.

The participants had to explain and justify the importance of their work to the institution. In

some cases, like the situation Sean shared, the ability to communicate about racism and

marginalization was obstructed by institutional leaders. As people of color, the absence of racial

power and privilege complicated their work, which resulted in the participants having to confront

instances of racism and individuals who were responsible for perpetuating challenging

environments.

Lacking Structural Support for Admitted Students of Color

Each participant shared their institution's approach to enhancing diversity focused

heavily on admitting more students of color, but without financial resource to support their

experience. Senior leaders promoted the idea of diversity through higher numbers of students of

color, but without additional resources. Ryan boldly challenged his institution's efforts with

students of color, acknowledging the burden this strategy places on students of color,

But so much of the rhetoric around diversifying campus is what we're giving to students

of color, low income students, the first-generation college students by opening the doors

of higher-education to them. And I just don't think that's the reality of what we're really

doing, maybe we're doing that at very, very, very low levels. I think the reality is that we

are largely just upholding the same power structures.

Admitting students of color into the institution is not a "gift" to them; students of color deserve

to be in the institution. Admitting students of color without support is a disservice and they

cannot be relied upon to diversify the institution. The increasing number of students of color has

caused professionals like Tyra to spend more time responding to student mental health concerns,

"I spend a lot of time coaching students through depression and anxiety and I don't want to be

here, I don't want to be around people and I'm like oh my gosh how are you going to survive

after you leave here?" Without sufficient spaces or staff to support students of color in their

experience, it is challenging for students to know where they can find support, especially within

large institutions. Tamara's attendance at student events is one example of countering

insufficient institutional support. This is how Tamara lets students know she cares about them,

> So, for me, it's so important for me to have my presence be known because I was an out
>
> of state student when I went to school and although I like to think myself as a fairly
>
> independent person, it's always nice and reassuring to know there's a faculty or staff
>
> member who you can go to and talk to for advice, support, anything of that nature and so
>
> I like to be that for our students.

College can be a lonely place; each of the participants made themselves available to students, but

also pushed programs that fostered connections and support.

Diversity has to be more than admitting more students of color or a phrase in mission

statements, publicized when something goes well. Tamara insightfully questioned, "What does

that look like, right? Because even when it comes to implementing it, the burden still goes on to

multicultural affairs or diversity offices." Tamara and the other participates recognized an

absence of diversity in institutional structures, which allowed oppressive behavior to persist,

engendering continued microaggressions and racist experiences for students of color. The

organizational structure influences how student affairs professionals, like the participants of this

study, engage students of color. For example, Tyra's position is not organizationally located

within student affairs. Her position is part of a division of equity and inclusion. As a result, she doesn't work closely with many student affairs colleagues, creating a sense of isolation. Another example occurred at Michelle's institution where institutional leaders cut funding to various cultural centers, leaving a void for students of color. The programs and staff no longer exist, but students still frequent the spaces of the former centers. This action created and communicated a message that power and privilege are more important than supporting students of color and diverse experiences.

Approaching Work with Students of Color

The importance of students and their experience was present across all narratives. Each participant described their efforts to provide students with an excellent experience, which at times meant speaking up to university administration, and in others it meant buying groceries for students to ensure they were being fed. The participants shared about their students, revealing the lesson's they acquired from this work. Students are understandably a significant part of the narratives, even if indirectly. For example, several artifacts included experiences with students, including, John's artifact, a thank you note from a former student. Student interactions were a motivating source for other participants, including Cathy who described student contact as re-energizing. How did the nine participants approach their work with students of color? The participants approached the work through prioritizing the experiences of students, serving as a resource, and ensuring students of color were included in campus environments.

Being a resource for students of color. Participants commonly used questions to understand students' experiences, and to focus on the student's narrative. Some participants described their approach as "bridging the gap" between the student and the university to ensure students had basic resources, including food and calculators, or to navigate job negotiations.

Working within a large institution, Tamara's open-door policy was a resource. She welcomed students into her office whenever the needed someone to talk with. Coaching and guidance through one-to-one interactions were another resource provided by the participants. Students often sought affirmation of decisions, or the right answer, which happened frequently for Larry,

> It's more like I'm doing the right thing, right? That's oftentimes the words that come out of their mouth, in terms of the question sense. For a lot of International students, or students that didn't grow up within the States, more or less they're really asking for permission, in terms of when can I do my internship? Or when can I take this course? What course I should take? What should I do in order to gain the skills that I need in order to get this job?

Serving as a resource also took forms that students would not see. Cathy discussed supporting students of color through policy and process-oriented conversations that took place in department meetings. This approach was in-direct, but still provided necessary advocacy and support.

Students would often turn to the participants for support. In his first role, Ryan found himself supporting students of color because he was one of few staff of color on campus, "It was navigating why are all of these students keep coming to me and I'm not their hall director, or I'm not their supervisor." Sean, would often identify himself in APIDA spaces, as he shared,

> That's how I ended up for the advisor as a couple of things because they knew I had that shared identity and was in the office and had met a few of the student leaders through various channels. Definitely the same with Residential. I think the two or three of the student orgs sought me out because I was one of two or three APIDA staff and faculty members on campus.

Being a resource for students of color also meant providing physical resources for students. John recalled an experience without access to necessary resources. "For instance, we had a student who needed a new graphic calculator, and so she would just kind of bum one off her friends for the time being, until we finally got some rentals for our program." Without John's intervention, that students may not have asked for help. Beyond time and resources, these participants also supported students of color through spaces and places within the institution.

Creating inclusive environments. "How can we include our students of color within our campus community?" Ryan posed this question as he discussed making space for students of color within the university. His answer went beyond allowing students of color into the university, calling for administrators to shift their paradigm about students of color. Acknowledging and understanding the ways that students of color arrive into the institution can help in creating a sense of home for students of color and treating them like they deserve to be in the institution.

Institutional culture was a commonly cited barrier. Tyra was forthcoming in describing her institution as fearful about supporting students and what might make it to news outlets,

Not that we can promise safety, no one can, but helping students to feel safer and supported, those things can't happen because were caught up in misaligned priorities and are fearful of national news media outlets picking up on something that we're doing that is new because we're always so quiet and timid about addressing issues.

The institution must provide support for students' safety and well-being, one professional cannot do it alone, as Tyra's perspective emphasized. Brenda had to become conscious about what to say and not to say in conversations with other members of the institution. The participants also

encouraged students to understand their voice and ability to make change to ensure that all voices are being heard.

Some participants fostered inclusive environments through policy and decision-making processes. Cathy's description of transitioning from a program coordinator role to an assistant director role included an elevated influence in decision-making. She now has more authority and influence, "I am now someone who receives bias incident reports as they're submitted. I'm included in processes that I previously wasn't. Students of concern, I'm looped in much earlier than I previously was, things like that. The support feels more structural than creative and individual." Inclusive environments happen through one-to-one interactions in the form of advising meetings, student events, and through and responses to bias incidents. The participants fostered and supported inclusive environments through trial and error and through understanding their institutional structures. The participants' graduate programs offered an exploration of how they fostered inclusive environments and responded to challenges.

Student Affairs Preparation

A focus of this study was understanding the graduate preparation of participants. Each participant's recollection of their student affairs journey and graduate preparation included varied experiences, which influenced their approach to working with students of color. It was clear that while graduate preparation programs were helpful, the experience was only a piece of the participants' overall preparation.

Graduate preparation. Each participant shared about their graduate preparation and experiences during their first interview. Eight of the nine participants obtained a graduate degree in a student affairs graduate program, while John obtained an MBA. Several of the participants described feeling less than prepared work with students of color after their graduate program.

Participants who completed a student affairs program, described discussions on race and diversity as not exploring enough depth and complexity. Coursework explored student identities, which informed the participants' perspectives; however, conversations were different from the work. All participants cited their work with students of color, relationships, or positions as their source of knowledge, as opposed to graduate programs.

Participants frequently mentioned two types of courses: student development theory and a diversity related course. While the classes did not wholly prepare the participants for their work as student affairs professionals, the classes imparted relevant knowledge and perspective. Brenda shared her appreciation for her diversity course, and the exposure it provided to her as a White identifying woman. The course helped her learn about various identities and social justice. Courses introduced or refreshed concepts of diversity and social justice, which informed participants' approach to work with students of color and discussing identities.

Student development courses provided the participants with additional understanding of varied student experiences. Ryan shared that his course provided greater understanding about what his students were experiencing and about student affairs work with students of color. Theories was also a class that resonated for Tamara,

> I would say it was a theory class that I had. It was almost kind of self-taught if you will
> and that is for a number of reasons. I think one of the biggest ones was the Cross and
> Fagan Smith Black identity development, for me was the first theory where I was like,
> wow this is, okay, these theorists are right. Before, I remember going through Chickering
> and Perry all them and was like snooze-fest, like ok.

Like the diversity course, participants' courses on identity development were helpful, but many participants noted a lack of depth in the material or conversations. Many of the participants,

including Tamara and Tyra discussed how many theories are based on non-diverse populations. The information of those theories may not apply to students of color. In most cases, the theories were a foundation to approaching conversations and interactions with students.

All nine participants paused when considering how their master's programs prepared them for student affairs work. While most of the participants shared positive aspects of their program, each participant shared important critiques of their program. Cathy's reflection is indicative of the difficulty the participants faced in identifying specific elements of their graduate preparation that allow them work well with students of color. Her graduate program did not provide specific explore how to support students of color, which was similar for all nine participants. Graduate programs were beneficial, but alone were not enough. As some participants progressed in their careers, knowledge from their graduate program seemed distant, and nearly forgotten. Tyra affirmed this notion, "My master's degree, I finished it so long ago, I have no idea what I did to be honest. I can remember sitting in the class, I don't know if any of that work truly prepared me for the work." There was a disconnect between graduate academic experiences and life as a full-time professional. Sean also affirmed the disconnect,

> I can't say that I retained a lot from that and it, I think that there's often a disconnect
> between theory to practice, we can talk about these theories, but I don't think that actually
> prepared me to work with these students, necessarily.

For some participants like Brenda, graduate preparation helped them feel qualified and competent as student affairs professional and for others, it was a credentialing exercise.

Work experiences were an influential form of learning for participants. All participants identified a class or academic experience that shaped their perspective; however, their work experiences provided the most insight. During Tamara's reflection, she described working as the

best preparation experience, "Yeah, I think even just I've been a professional now for almost six years, so I think it's also just being a new professional somewhere." In terms of being prepared to work with students of colors, professionals like Sean who worked in a multicultural center found the preparation came from the work, "I would say because I worked in the multicultural center, most of that preparation came from there, not from the academic program." If professionals who are engaged in work with students of color perceive the program is not adequately preparing them, it's important to ask why not.

(Re)examining student affairs preparation. During this study, all participants reflected on their student affairs experiences, providing advice to help other professionals, especially new professionals about working with students of color. Responses emphasized a need for professionals to understand their own identities, and for greater institutional support. Cathy's encouraged new professionals to explore their own racial identity development, "I've experienced a lot of anti-Blackness in my community growing up. So, if I'm a staff member of color supporting students of color, how might my home-grown biases of certain populations impact the work that I do?" Larry had a similar response,

> I think, as a new professional coming in and working with students of color, they're gonna have to do a lot of work on their own; figure out what their own biases are, figure out where the blank spots are, and also figure out what the strengths are, in terms of working with students, right?

Self-reflection helped participants appreciate and understand their experiences as separate from their students' experiences. Learning about student development theories helped some participants engage in self-reflection about their identities, but the reflection was not necessarily and intentional element of their programs.

Graduate preparation programs should provide spaces for students of color to gather and be in community with one another. When students in graduate programs become full-time professionals, they are often on the front lines, spending much of their time interacting with students. Tamara focused on the need for self-care in her advice to new professionals and the need for action beyond conversation. Self-care is discussing strategies to manage time, eating and sleeping, and giving the best version of one's self to students.

A final piece of advice focused on supervisors, a crucial component of supporting students of color. Without proper supervision, student affairs professional may not be effective in their roles. Tyra's lack of supervisory support left her feeling distant from student affairs work, even more so being organizationally located outside of a student affairs division. Cathy shared her experience of confronting a colleague's unsupportive supervisor who,

> So, from white supervisors, this colleague came to me and was like, I can't tell if my professional development opportunities aren't coming because it's race, but it's starting to feel like it. How can I navigate this? And he felt very alone.

Not all student affairs professionals have supportive supervisors. Understanding how to confront a seemingly unsupportive supervisor can be a fear inducing task. Cathy was willing to engage the confrontation as a fierce and supportive colleague. While simulation of this challenge may not be realistic, it is an issue that professionals should be able to navigate. All of the participants described relationships that offered support and helped them manage challenges like unsupportive supervisors.

Supporting Relationships

Supporting relationships were one of the strongest themes, providing insight into what and who informed the participants' approaches to working with students of color. Each

participant shared about an advisor or mentor who shaped their student affairs story. Mentors guided participants into student affairs, helped identify graduate programs, and served as a resource for the participants. Some participants highlighted other prominent relationships with friends, colleagues, and spouses or life-partners. Supporting relationship provided counsel and commiseration for the challenges and triumphs of working with students of color. Cathy developed a staff and faculty of color lunch to foster the mentorship and guidance not received from supervisors. Ryan also shared about the importance of having relatable colleagues,

> Just this morning there was myself and two other Black men who are directors of offices within our division, so we had a little group chat. We were just talking about stupid stuff, like Black Panther, and just kind of joking with each other about stuff, and at the end of the conversation I was like, man this is such a great way to start my Friday. Just to be in community where we're not necessarily working directly with each other, but just to have that network is really important.

Ryan's group chat connected other Black professionals in community, fostering a shared understanding of the challenges of working with students of color.

Six of the participants directly discussed a mentoring relationship and mentioned supporting relationships. Ryan and Tyra noted the importance of peers with the exhausting nature of the work. Ryan's current institution is the first with other Black men in student affairs, which has fostered a sense of community. Tyra's relationship with another colleague has sustained her and helps keeps her working at the institution.

Most of the participants in this study identified as people of color. Developing relationships with other professionals of color is important. Cathy expressively shared the importance of finding other people of color to connect with in doing this work,

I also think a new professional and practitioners of color need to find people that support

who you are in whatever little ways that is. If you are a professional or practitioner of

color who likes to play video games, try to find people who suit that…Like, whatever it

is, find somebody, find colleagues and friends that make you feel whole because work

settings will always feel, there's going to be so many opportunities in work spaces to feel

like you're being pieced apart into compartmentalized pieces.

Connecting with others who can understand and appreciate one another was key for these

participants to persist through the challenges they encountered.

Mentors. Mentors encouraged and guided the participants into student affairs. During

Larry's undergraduate experience, he sought out mentors to learn more about student,

Like I said before, something that contributed to my journey into student affairs is all the

people that I met who have been so gracious, so caring, and allowed me to be, to have the

questions that I have and to ask them without saying you know that's a stupid question,

that we should think about it that way.

Cathy described her mentors as "possibility models", individuals in student affairs roles who had

similar identities. Possibility models allowed Cathy to see herself in similar roles and to know

her identities would be supported. Mentoring relationships were a continual influence for these

participants and how they approached working with students of color.

Importance of colleagues and supporting relationships. Supporting relationships

included peers and colleagues who provided needed support. Cathy navigated life as a new

professional alongside colleagues with similar experiences and stories. Ryan connected with

other professionals of color to create a text affinity group to send questions and messages of

support. These relationships provided the institutional support professionals needed. Brenda

used conversations with colleagues to find moments of relief when the work got tough. Tyra was honest in acknowledging unsupportive relationships within her institution. She attributed relationships to helping her continue working at her institution, "I have a colleague that I wouldn't be here if it weren't for her." The relationship provided support, feedback, and challenge. Mentors and supporting relationships sustained the participants their work.

Chapter Summary

No story is the same. The differences in each participant's student affairs story and how they approached working with students of color added important depth and complexity to their perspective. As I listened, transcribed, and shared each participant's story in writing, I was awestruck. The journeys of each participants caused me to reflect upon my own student affairs journey and the relevance of student affairs work.

Throughout this study, participants reflected on their student affairs story. Some stories highlighted childhood experiences, with all sharing their discovery of student affairs work. Participants also shared challenges of working with students of color, including a lack of resources, feeling burdened by the work, and minimal opportunities to make decisions. Students were an unequivocal focus, shared through artifacts and approaches. I began the chapter with portraits of the participants to highlight their stories, work with students of color, and their artifacts. The common categories of the portraits connected similarities, while also displaying key differences. The findings of this study integrated the participants' stories to better understand how professionals work with students of color and what informed their approaches. In the next chapter, I share my perspective of the findings with relevant literature on student affairs preparation, racism, and campus environments, and provide implications and recommendations for student affairs professionals, educators, and scholars.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Protests and demonstrations by students of color over the last several years prompted my

desire to know how student affairs professionals are working with students of color (Jaschik,

2015; Mangan, 2016; Pearson, 2015; Scott, 2016). Students have demonstrated unrest through

protests and responses to racialized events at colleges and university across the country, which

has challenged any notion of a post-racial society (Huber & Solórzano, 2014). While this study

is focused on student affairs professionals and not student activism, my observation of these

events sparked a desire to explore professionals and their work with students of color. In this

study, I explored the experiences of nine student affairs professionals. The purpose of the study

was to better understand how these individuals approached working with students of color. The

participants included new professionals and professionals with up to 15 years of full-time work.

Of the nine participants, three identified as Black women, two as Asian men, Chinese and

Filipino more specifically, one as a Black man, one as a bi-racial man, one as a Chicana-Mexican

woman, and one as a White woman. During two semi-structured interviews, participants shared

stories of their experiences and journeys into student affairs work. The work of professionals,

especially their work with students of color, is rarely the focus of research and scholarship, much

of the research concerns senior student affairs officers and their perceptions and expectations of

new professionals (Bensimon, 2007; Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, & Molina, 2009; Dickerson,

Hoffman, Anan, Brown, Vong, & Bresciani, 2011; Luedke, 2017; Reynolds & Altabef, 2015).

Utilizing narrative inquiry, I focused on perspectives and experiences of new to mid-level student affairs professionals.

Two research questions guided this study: In what ways do student affairs professionals work with students of color at predominantly and historically white institutions? What informs student affairs professionals' approaches to working with students of color? Participants' narratives revealed responses to these questions and their work with students of color, including their preparation for the work. The narratives provided insight about the participants' pursuit of student affairs work and how their identities influenced their work. In this Chapter, I explore the findings in relation to relevant research and scholarship. I also share implications for student affairs professionals, student affairs graduate faculty, and higher education administrators. Finally, I present directions for further research and conclude with a summary of the study.

Discussion

Participants shared stories of their work with students of color, revealing various approaches: one-to-one interactions, attending student events, and advocacy. Through their stories, the participants emphasized the effects of racism in higher education, both through their experiences and students' experiences. Several pieces were foundational in understanding the participants' work: the role of the participants' race, the participants' student affairs story, mentors and supporting relationships, and graduate programs and experiences. I discuss the themes, while examining how the underpinning literature of this study helps me to interpret the findings.

Participants' narratives confirmed several aspects of the literature, including the relevance of race and racism for students of color, elevated by institutional structures that promote and sustain racism (Goodman, 2012; Museus & Park, 2015), the negative influence of

campus culture for students of color (Gregory, 2000; Guiffrida, Marquez Kyama, Waterman, & Museus, 2012; Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim & Yonai, 2013; Maramba & Museus, 2013; Museus, Ravello, & Vega, 2012), and the importance of self-awareness in working with students of color (Mueller & Pope, 2003). Additionally, the findings support the importance of understanding the journey of student affairs professionals. The experiences of a student affairs professional are paramount in understanding how to help students of color recognize their relationship with race, addressing challenges with the institutional climate, and translating graduate experiences into working with students of color. I begin the discussion with race, progressing to challenges the participants experienced in working with students of color, followed by their stories and preparation experiences, concluding with supporting relationships.

Significance of Race

The participants' stories are a reminder of the continual influence of race and racism in college environments through racial inequality and a layered history of racist institutional structures (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009; Hurtado, Alvarado, & Guillermo-Wann, 2015; Johnston, 2014; Johnston, Pizzolato, & Kanny, 2015; Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007). For example, Brenda shared about her students, noting the hopelessness some students feel because of the racism and brutality occurring in society and on campus following the Black Lives Matter movement, which communicated the continual challenges of racism for students of color (Boatright-Horowitz, Frazier, Harps-Logan, & Crockett, 2012; Diver-Stamens & Lomascolo, 2001; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Nadal, et al., 2014; Rankin, & Reason, 2005). Other participants discussed race and racism with students to find connections between experiences on campus and in society. For example, Ryan

incorporated conversation about Black Lives Matter in his artifact, describing the importance of connecting work with students of color on campus to larger social issues. In both stories, Brenda and Ryan signified how race continues to be an influential factor.

Much of the existing literature about racism in higher education affirmed racism has not diminished (Boatright-Horowitz, Frazier, Harps-Logan, & Crockett, 2012; Dreid & Najmabadi, 2016; Rhoads, 2016) and more importantly, the literature describes the imbedded nature of racism in the structures of higher education, from a physical and metaphorical sense (Davis & Harris, 2016: Harper, 2012; Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). The participants' experiences upheld these characteristics of racism. In Ryan's narrative, he mentioned how additional work assignments with students of color felt like a "race tax," an example of institutional racism. Ryan also described racial subordination through the policies, procedures, and practices of the institution where Ryan, as a person of color, was subordinate to leaders of the institution (Museus & Park, 2015). Sean shared an experience where a colleague defined racism in an ally workshop as needing power and privilege, resulting in an inherent sense of racism within Whiteness. Senior leaders could have supported Sean's colleague and taken an opportunity to name racism, but instead senior leaders refuted the colleague's statement, exerting power and privilege (Brookfield, 2014; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Goodman, 2012). Race and racism were influential in the participants' work with students of color, and their own experiences as people of color working in higher education.

The influence of the participant's identities on their work with students of color. The relevance of race in the participants' own experiences and their work was unsurprising given the focus on race in the study. Within their stories, each participant discussed how their identities shaped who they are and how they approached student affairs work. In Tyra's

narrative, her identity as a Black woman added layers of exhaustion to an already full plate of responsibilities. More specifically, her identity led to engaging in work that she did not observe with her male counterparts, including assuming a mothering role with students. Sean shared disclosing his racial identity as an integral component of his approach, letting students know he was an available resource (Luedke, 2017). The participants' identities informed their journey into student affairs, and how they approached working with their students. Cathy shared that awareness of her identity enables her to understand the experiences of her students, especially first-generation students. Each participant's exploration of their racial identity centered race and allowed them to articulate how race informs their work. For example, Larry's racial identity as an Asian American immigrant informs his works with current international students. He described being intentional about not influencing students' experiences by relying on his own experiences. Race and racism significantly influenced the participants and their work, underlying many of the challenges associated with working with students of color.

Acknowledging Brenda's Identity as a White Woman. Brenda shared about the importance and relevance of her identity as a White woman and how it informed her work with students of color. Even though Brenda is bi-racial, she identifies as White and passes as White in a majority of spaces and interactions with other individuals. Her identity as a White woman provided her with awareness of about her racial identity. She recognized that as a White woman, there are spaces that students of color conversations they engage in that she is unable to fully understand. Of the nine participants, Brenda was the only White identifying participant. The salience of Brenda's White identity made her conscious of her privilege, especially when interacting with students of color. As the only White identifying participant in this study, Brenda's experience is the only experience from a White student affairs professional. While

Brenda is the only White professional in this study, she does not represent all White professionals. Without additional White participants, important perspective is absent from the findings of the study. Brenda's participation as the only White participant also prompts the importance of being conscious about making assumptions with regard to White student affairs professionals. White student affairs professionals can be an important resource for students of color. The perspective of more White professionals is needed to understand how they are approaching working with students of color.

Challenges of Working with Students of Color

The challenges described by the participants included: institutional climate and culture, a lack of connection to the institution, and the exclusion of students of color. Students of color frequently experienced racial discrimination, stereotypes, and prejudice as they develop connections to peers and the institution (Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim & Yonai, 2013; Maramba & Museus, 2013). Tamara shared that because her institutions is young, there is not an institutional history steeped in systemic racism and oppression. In contrast, Tyra described her institutions efforts to admit more students of color, without hiring more faculty and staff of color, who are necessary to provide sustaining relationships and social support (Baker & Robnett, 2012). Larry described the absence of a cultural center within his institution as offering minimal support for students of color, which communicated spaces for students of color are not an institutional priority (Cole & Harper, 2016; Hardiman, Jackson, & Griffin, 2013; Hurtado, et al., 2012; Laird, & Niskodé-Dossett, 2010; Kenney, Dumont, & Kenney 2005; Kuh, Schuh, Kinzie, Whitt, & Associates, 2005; Strange, & Banning, 2015). The situations shared by the participants represented minimal support within institutional structures, which contributed to students of

color feeling disconnected and out of place (Nadal, et al., 2014). Upon further exploration, participants disclosed the campus climate as influential in their perceived lack of support.

Campus climate affects student affairs professionals' work with students of color.

Negative campus climate amplified challenges for the participants through acts racism and feelings of discomfort (Gregory, 2000; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, Miles, Clayton-Pederson, & Allen, 1998; Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim, & Yonai, 2013). Hostile institutional climates were present in subtle ways throughout the narratives. Examples included Sean's recollection of a University President disavowing the comments his colleague made about racism, and Tyra's description of her students as disconnected from the institution. Tyra described students of color at her institution as unconnected; students often went home instead of staying on campus. Even when opportunities like free movie tickets were offered, it was a struggle to get students to attend. In Tyra's opinion, the institution did little to keep student on campus or provide opportunities for them to be connected and engaged. Racial slurs and hostile environments created negative campus climates, which created environments of discomfort and disconnection (Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim, & Yonai, 2013). Hostile campus climates forced many of the participants to feel unsupported and burdened.

Intentionally including students of color in programs and leadership roles. Each of the participants described efforts to include students of color through student leadership opportunities, physical gathering spaces, and providing essential resources. The presence of students of color within student organizations and involvement opportunities conveys details about campus climate, influencing students' comfort and involvement (Gregory, 2000; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, et al., 1998). Creating opportunities for students of color to participate

and interact with other students are crucial (Chang, 2007; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Both Brenda and John recognized the importance of making opportunities more inclusive and shared about communicating with student organizations to encourage students of color to become involved. Organizations that are not inclusive of race and identity pose negative efforts on students of color (Park, 2014). Brenda and John utilized involvement to engage students of color as orientation leaders and peer mentors, which has important effects for students' retention and persistence (Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

A deficit perspective about students of color focuses on what these students do not have, or how they are different. Historically, White people excluded students of color, viewing them as deficient, rather than acknowledging their attributes and experiences (Bourdieu, 1986; Capple, 1998; Yosso, 2005). Ryan advocated for a paradigm change, instead of asking how to include students of color, he advocated for considering how are they already a part of the institution. When institutions recognize students of color as legitimate, students have a higher propensity of becoming connected (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008), rather than experiencing negative environments with decreased sense of belonging (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera, 2008). The participants discussed including students of color and described how they work combatted deficit perspectives.

Recognizing the differences in identity and experiences. Referring to all non-White students as students of color does not recognize the unique experiences of different racial and ethnic identities. Throughout this study I used students of color to refer to non-White students; however, I recognize it is not a one size fits all term. Listening to the stories of each of the participants provided an important reminder that their racial identities are not monolithic; they represent different identities, and different experiences. Each of the participants discussed the

nuances of working with various racial and ethnic student identities. Cathy discussed working with Latino/a and Hispanic students, who were also first-generation students, noting the importance of intersectional identities. Students involved in the TRiO program she coordinates are first-generation, and members of migrant working families, in additional to their racial and ethnic identity. Cathy described her work as ensuring the university recognized and supported students' intersectional identities. Tyra shared about her experiences working with Black students as the director of a multicultural center. She often spent time acting as a mother figure for her students, making sure they ate, drank enough water, and slept enough the night before. Acting as a mother figure was Tyra's response not only to her students' identities, but her identities as a Black woman. As a woman, Tyra provided a high level of care to students to ensure their needs were met, which was not an expectation of male colleagues. While the institution did not provide sufficient resources to these students, Tyra stepped in to ensure they had a positive experience. Larry explained the influence of his students' identities on their desire to perform academically. Many of the students Larry supported are from India and China. These students perform well academically, but may not understand American culture. As a result, Larry focused his advising on clarifying culture and helping students communicate their strengths to future employers. The participants shared numerous challenges in their work with students of color. It became apparent that a significant resource in working with students of color was recognizing and understanding each participant's student affairs story.

The Importance of Student Affairs Professionals' Stories

The participants' stories provided enlightening information about how they work with students of color, and what informs their approaches as student affairs professionals. It was important for me to maintain participants' perspectives with minimal editing. Portraits of each

participant provided a written illustration, which helped accomplish this goal. Each participant

provided descriptive details about experiences at specific moments in their careers. Within the

portrait, each participant shared a richness and complexity about their work with and for students

of color, largely influenced by positive undergraduate experiences.

   The undergraduate experiences of student affairs professionals. Student affairs

professionals often mention a positive undergraduate experience or mentors as their reasons for

choosing student affairs (Linder & Winston Simmons, 2015). This sentiment held true for all the

participants. Involvement experiences helped crystalize interest in student affairs work, as

Brenda mentioned by sharing her involvement with student government and a sorority. The

participants were also introduced to mentors through their involvement experiences. Larry found

his mentors through involvement in the Asian American Center and residential life, while Sean

grew close to the assistant director in the multicultural center. Positive experiences and mentors

led to student affairs work.

   Understanding student affairs professionals work with students of color. Within the

narratives, participants focused on recognizing gender and race as ways of understanding their

work with students of color. The work was impactful and traumatic for some participants. Tyra

shared about serving as a "Mom," which was exhausting; however, she knew her students

needed the support of a mother figure, so she provided it to her students (Baker & Robnett, 2012;

Luedke, 2017). Similarly, Michelle described working with students in the Women's Center

who experience unhealthy or abusive relationships with family, friends, or significant others.

Working with students of color involves numerous challenges, but it is important and meaningful

work. Each aspect of participant's student affairs story revealed an important richness about

their work with students of color and how they became socialization into the student affairs

profession (Collins, 2009). The richness of their stories provided detail about what informs the participants' approaches to working with students of color, which was one of the two questions for this study. For many of the participants, involvement experiences, mentors, and their graduate programs informed how they now work with students of color.

Preparing for Work as a Student Affairs Professional

Participants shared experiences about their graduate programs, specifically the elements in their programs that related to working with students of color. Coursework alone did not provide the participants with the knowledge or ability to work with students of color. Tamara and Michelle attributed their preparation to their assistantships. Sean, Ryan, and Cathy described assignments and coursework that contributed to their understanding. Ryan and Cathy used papers and assignments to explore topics that enhanced their understanding of underrepresented students and students of color, to provide better support. Each participant reflected on how their program provided knowledge, skills, and abilities to inform their student affairs work, while also providing a critique of their experience. Participant critiques focused on the absence of nuance for topics including race, racism, and student identities in course assignments and conversations, which created missed opportunities to explore systemic oppression (hooks, 1994). Scholarship about graduate preparation in student affairs focuses on skills and competencies (Burkard, Cole, Ott, & Stoflet, 2005; Dickerson, et al., 2011; Herdlein, 2004; Herdlein, Riefler, & Mrowka, 2013; Perez, 2016; Reynolds & Altabef, 2015). The participants' critiques affirmed the need for skills like advising, but problematize preparation programs as a primary source of multicultural skills. Many of the participants regarded their work experiences as preparation for work as opposed to their graduate programs.

Student affairs skills, competencies, and courses. Current research about the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities of student affairs professionals highlights student development theory, assessment practices, problem-solving, and awareness of diversity related topics, among others knowledge and skills (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, & Molina, 2009; Kuk, Cobb, & Forrest, 2007; Dickerson, et al., 2011). While these topics may prepare student affairs professionals for work with students of color, merely covering these topics is not sufficient for preparing for professionals to work with and support students of color. Of the nine participants, eight pursued a student affairs graduate program. The participants' perspective affirmed the on-going contention about the necessary content or competencies of student affairs graduate preparation programs. More specifically, I focused this study on how professionals can prepare for work with students of color, with one of my research questions focusing on what informs the approach of the participants as they work with students of color.

Higher education and student affairs (HESA) graduate programs often include a diversity course (Flowers, 2003), which many of the participants described in their narrative. While many of the participants mentioned their diversity course, they also described it as only one piece of their preparation. Cathy could not describe anything structurally within her graduate program that helped, noting a missed opportunity for her White peers in learning about students of color. Michelle also participated in a diversity focused class, but found professional experiences to be a more useful source of preparation (Collins, 2009; Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Perez, 2016). Courses provided a foundation for the participants to customize their experience and incorporate topics of interest, which informed their work with students of color. Diversity is necessary and the participants affirmed the need for diversity related topics (Gayles & Kelly, 2007). HESA

graduate programs and courses on diversity and student development provided insightful information; however, professionals needed more preparation and additional experiences.

Critiques of student affairs graduate programs. The participants' critiques of their graduate programs focused on the exploration of identity and race, or a lack thereof. In describing her graduate experience, Brenda shared that her classmates were a significant influence in shaping her approach to working with students of color. While she gained knowledge insight through coursework, her classmates greatly influenced her experience. Brenda's sentiment was also shared by other participants who recalled attending classes where they could not recall the content of the course. The participants did not regard their programs as insufficient or unhelpful, but rather identified areas where additional knowledge or resources would have shaped their work differently (Boss, Linder, Martin, Dean, & Fitzer, 2018). The participants' experiences affirm a continued need for diversity and social justice preparation with new professionals (Cuyjet, et al., 2009; Dickerson, et al., 2011). There are many topics within the equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) umbrella, which along with the participants' experiences supports the need for greater EDI focus in in HESA programs (Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Kelley & Gayles, 2010). Each of the participants experiences provided a starting point that allowed them to seek out further tools to work with students of color.

While the participants provided critiques of their graduate programs, they also expressed an affinity for their programs. Through graduate programs, the participants connected with faculty who served as mentors who helped them grow as professionals. Classmates in graduate programs also helped the participants develop as student affairs professionals. Institutions expect student affairs professionals to be proficient in student development and diversity, but the preparation of professionals varies greatly (Burkard, et al., 2005; Herdlein, 2004). Learning does

not end with the completion of an educational program; learning continues to occur, especially through important and supportive relationships. The knowledge and insight participants did acquire from their programs was a key aspect of how the participants supported and interacted with students of color.

Supporting Relationships for Student Affairs Professionals

HESA programs socialize future student affairs professionals with requisite knowledge and competencies, but there is not a formalized space for individuals to share their student affairs story. In most narratives, the participants described important individuals who encouraged them to do student affairs work. Supporting relationships have potential to enhance the pipeline of student affairs professionals through the recruiting and mentoring of individuals into the student affairs field.

Graduate programs socialize student affairs professionals to the field of student affairs (Kuk & Cuyjet, 2009; Perez, 2016); however, socialization to working with students of color for the participants in this study came from their supporting relationships. Supporting relationships allowed participants to ask questions deepening their learning about the student affairs profession. Current literature references the importance of relationships through mentors, which often inform professionals choice to pursue student affairs (Linder & Winston Simmons, 2015); however, there is a need for further additional exploration of supporting relationships. In this study, I asked: What informs student affairs educators' approaches to supporting students of color within the campus environment? Across the narratives, it was clear that supporting relationships significantly informed how the participated approached their student affairs work.

Study Parameters

All nine of the participants in this study worked at different institutions of higher education. The narratives illustrate the participant's unique and shared experiences; however, the data in this study does not speak to the entire field of student affairs, nor does it provide conversation about a specific institutional context. However, the goal of this study was not to provide generalized knowledge, but to understand work with students of color on an individual level. The findings suggest topics within the narratives that can lead to further questioning and further understanding, rather than providing information about one institution.

Eight of nine participants identified as people of color with the one participant who identified as White, also disclosing they are bi-racial. With the demographics of the participants in mind, the results of the study are focused on professionals of color who work with students of color. The variation in participant identities is beneficial, but the variation maintains the uniqueness of each participant's experience. I intentionally sought people of color for the study based upon my researcher perspective and to acknowledge the voice of White people are dominant and often receive recognition (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). During participant recruitment, I encouraged professionals of color to participate through social media posts and personal messages. Based upon the represented identities, the study shares how eight professionals of color and one White professional work with students of color.

Implications for Practice

What do the stories of nine student affairs professionals mean for the field of student affairs and the support of students of color? The insight shared by the participants leads to several strategies and approaches that can influence how professionals receive support, interact with colleagues, and confront race, power, and privilege (Baker & Robnett, 2012; Bensimon,

2007; Renn & Reason, 2013). Senior student affairs leaders and faculty in preparation programs need to better prepare professionals for work with students of color. Student affairs preparation programs continue to be an avenue of providing this preparation. Institutions of higher education also need to participate in alleviating the challenges for student affairs professionals. In this section, I explore implications based upon the findings and participant stories, including the intentional sharing of student affairs stories, dismantling racism, creating community for professionals, resourcing student affairs work, and the preparation of professionals.

Making Time and Space to Share Student Affairs Stories

Each participants' student affairs story served as a reflective process, offering understanding of how they approached work with students of color (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Asking a professional to share their student affairs story is not common, which Tyra acknowledged in her first interview. Providing opportunities for student affairs professionals to share their student affairs stories can form connections and shared understanding between professionals, especially for professionals of color (Appadurai, 2006; Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Delgado, 1989; Hones, 1998; Solórzano, & Yosso, 2002). Making time to understand professionals' stories provides greater understanding of the intricacies associated with student affairs work as a person of color. The experiences for professionals of color are not the same as White professionals. Sharing stories centers the reality and importance of race and highlights racism, power, and oppression in the experience of professionals of color. Student affairs stories expand personal experiences into knowledge, which can inform work with students of color.

Student affairs stories can convey rich information and knowledge (Adams, 2008; Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Supervisors need to offer time for professionals to share their stories, to get a deeper sense of each

professional, and to identify areas where they will need support. Incorporating sharing of student affairs stories enhances learning and connects our work to our experiences. Creating time and space for professionals to share their stories is a platform to understand how racism, privilege, and oppression influenced their experiences, particularly for professionals of color. For example, Ryan learned the importance of having other colleagues of color after several roles where he was tasked with work in addition to his formal role. Race is salient for student affairs professionals, shaping understanding of their identity and how they interact with students of color. Formalizing the sharing of stories emphasizes the centrality of race in student affairs, which can inform work with students of color.

Student affairs is a helping profession (American Council on Education, 1937; Caple, 1998; Gerda, 2006), but little emphasis focused on helping professionals learn about each other, to understand the experiences that lead colleagues to their current roles, and how racism and oppression have influenced professionals' approach to working with students of color. Student affairs can and must do better to ensure there are professionals of color who can relate to students of color. Professionals of color need attention and support. Working in racist environments with subtle and overt acts of racism is exhausting, traumatic, and difficult. Institutions that prioritize diversity must also prioritize professionals of color.

Dismantling Racism, Privilege, and Oppressive Power Structures

Racism, privilege, and power were continual themes throughout the participants' stories, influencing their experiences, and the experiences of students of color. Understanding each of these elements is necessary to move towards environmental and institutional changes that diminish the oppressive effects of racism, privilege, and oppression. Dismantling racism, privilege, and oppression is an arduous endeavor that needs to be approached from several

angles. Organizational structures, the role and influence of institutional leaders, physical structures and the involvement of White colleagues are areas where the process of dismantling may begin.

Student affairs professionals shape their approaches to working with students of color based upon the organizational structure of institutions, who reports to whom and what information is important, which can perpetuate oppressive experiences (Brookfield, 2014; Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). For example, Tyra's position is organizationally located in a division of equity and inclusion, and not student affairs. She shared the organizational structure precludes formal collaborations with colleagues in traditional student affairs roles. Tyra also acknowledged adopting a mothering approach to ensure her students' basic needs were provided. Sean commented on the organizational structures when he described the University President's Office intervention following remarks of a colleague in the multicultural center with the President disavowing the remarks of the staff member about the connection between Whiteness and racism. Privilege, racism, and oppression provided additional work, which added layers of exhaustion and burnout, while the participants' students experienced microaggressions. People who perpetuate racism, privilege, and oppression marginalize and discriminate people and students of color (Harper, 2012; Reason & Evans, 2007) and for student affairs professionals it makes working with students of color more difficult. Racism is a current and pervasive challenge for student affairs professionals. Power, privilege, oppression, and racisms must be confronted in order to dismantle structures that segregate and marginalize. For example, Ryan described a campus forum following a racial incident where staff were hesitant to speak up. Unwilling to wait for someone to speak, Ryan rose to action, asking why the campus was not enacting solutions to the problem. Professionals

can and must be bold, to confront racism in situations where cautious administrators do not speak publicly or address policy to dismantle structures, spaces, and practices that marginalize and oppress (Cole & Harper, 2016; Davis & Harris, 2016; Strayhorn, 2013). Instead of waiting for permission, supervisors and senior leaders should be helping professionals voice their opinion to ensure student success.

Institutional leaders must dismantle the oppressive and disruptive elements of institutions to foster more inclusive environments. It is not enough to name that racism exists, actions must follow. Student affairs professionals must place pressure on senior leaders through continual questioning to respond to acts racism and oppression in both physical and non-physical structures, while also working to prevent future incidents. Institutional leaders should embolden professional to share their insights about working directly with students of color.

Dismantling racism requires attending to people within the institution and the structures they inhabit. Dismantling racism and oppression within physical structures involves renaming buildings associated with proponents of segregation. Physical structures are the most recognizable and expressive parts of an institution (Strange & Banning, 2001; Strange & Banning, 2015), renaming buildings is a step in creating inclusive spaces. Inclusive spaces are an important start, but recognizing the legacy of exclusive spaces that were not built for people of color is the important work. Building new spaces, literally and figuratively and using inclusive language are important steps to that can help professionals work with students of color.

White student affairs professionals are an important resource in the dismantling oppression. White professionals must be equipped to engage with students of color. White professionals must acknowledge their participation in racism; continuing to tax professionals of color solidifies this exclusionary behavior as integral to the organizational and campus culture

(Bolman & Deal, 2013; Strange & Banning, 2015). White professionals need to engage in understanding how to best work with students of color through reflection and mindfulness of their identity, and how it informs their interactions with students. Challenging dominant ideology, including Whiteness, power, privilege, and oppression is necessary to ensure that structures of power are disrupted and dismantled. Throughout this process, the need for community must also be addressed, especially for professionals of color.

Fulfilling A Need for Community

There is a distinctive need for professionals of color to have communities of other professionals who they can connect with and develop relationships. Connections among professionals of color offer support as these individuals help students navigate racist and traumatic experiences. A community of professionals with shared identities creates a structure for professionals to counter the effects of racism, including marginalization and discrimination by White individuals who exert their power and privilege (Harper, 2012; Reason & Evans, 2007). Professionals who engage in community emphasize the relevance of their experiences through sharing stories, asking questions, and sustaining a dialogue about racism (Davis & Harris, 2016). Without community, senior student affairs leaders imply professionals of color are not as important and not in need of support (Allen & Cherry, 2003; Bensimon, 2007; Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, & Barnett, 2005).

Supporting relationships are a form of community that can sustain professionals of color in their work, which has become more complex and exhausting (Barham & Scott, 2006; Bresciani, 2006; Sediman, 2005). Community takes several forms, including affinity groups that connect professionals of similar backgrounds and experiences together. This type of community allows professionals, and more specifically professionals of color to commiserate about their

experiences, to share challenges, and to help each other how to navigate taxing institutional structures. Community extends beyond physical presence and once established allows members the ability to connect via technology. Colleagues of color, from similar backgrounds, help motivate and sustain each other through the messy and exhausting nature of working with students of color.

Mentoring relationships are another form of community, providing knowledge, emotional support and guidance for student affairs professionals. Many student affairs professionals enter the profession following guidance from their mentor (Linder & Winston Simmons, 2015). In this study, mentors were a significant source of encouragement for the participants, as they navigated student affairs as people of color. Six of the nine participants shared about mentor relationships and how the individuals have influenced their student affairs journey. Mentors transmit the student affairs profession to prospective professionals. Without mentors, some professionals may not learn about the profession or pursue it. Larry was one of the participants who used mentors to better understand his racial identity in relation to his career trajectory. Prior to graduate school, Larry asked a mentor how his identity as an Asian man would influence his work and consideration for jobs. Professionals of color need mentors of color to guide them into the profession and to ensure they are receiving sustaining support. Mentors and supporting relationships fill in the gaps of graduate preparation programs. For example, Cathy's mentors modeled working in the profession regardless of racial, ethnic, gender, or sexual identities.

Senior Student Affairs Officers also have an opportunity to support affinity programs and mentoring relationships to ensure the success of student affairs professionals, specifically professionals of color.   Integrating community within student affairs divisions influences the culture of the division and day-to-day interactions (Bolman & Deal, 2013; Strange & Banning,

2015). Supporting the creation of communities and mentorship within student affairs divisions

for professionals of color communicates relationships and connections as priorities in the climate

and culture (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Strange & Banning, 2015).

Facilitating community for professionals to interact with one another can result in a

positive work culture where professionals are resourced to support students of color through

involvement and a more positive campus climate (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). A community of

professionals of color can also provide the motivation and support to confront dismissive

environments that decrease sense of belonging (Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Locks, et al., 2008).

Affinity communities are necessary to ensure professionals and more specifically professionals

of color feel supported so they can work with students through challenging and traumatic

circumstances. Student affairs leaders must make these communities a priority and a reality.

Properly Resourcing the Success of Students of Color

Insufficient resources inhibit support for students of color. Numerous participants

mentioned insufficient resources as a challenge in their work with students of color. Enrolling

more students of color in institutions requires more resources: more staff, more programs, and

greater institutional acknowledgement of needs for these students; however, working with

students of color with minimal or insufficient resources is more often the norm. Faculty and

staff of color who can engage students of color are one of the most important resources for their

success. Students of color can experience psychological and emotional trauma through

marginalization in the classroom, having their perspective dismissed, and from years of

socialization from a dominant White perspective (Chang, 2007; Diver-Stamens & Lomascolo,

2001; Harper, 2012; Hurtado, Miles, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998; Solórzano, Ceja, &

Yosso, 2000; Sue, 2004; Park, 2012). Under-resourcing student affairs professionals in their

work with students of color perpetuates racism through silence, insinuating harassment, hostile behavior, and the struggles students of color experience are okay (Cole & Harper, 2016; Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Park, 2012; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Rhoads, 2016). Insufficient resources communicate a lack of concern for the experiences of students of color and professionals of color, insinuating what is provided is enough.

Professionals of color who receive additional responsibilities for advising organizations for students of color or recruiting students of color assume an additional burden, intensifying the exhaustive nature of the work. Consequently, professionals work beyond their capacity to bridge the gap for students, to ensure students of color have the necessary resources to sustain themselves and persist towards graduation. In addition to properly supported professionals, students of color also need physical spaces on campus where they know they are welcome. Cultural centers provide this resource for many students of color, especially when students of color view other facilities as exclusionary, including athletic facilities or fraternity and sorority houses (Laird & Niskodé-Dossett, 2010; Park, 2014). Physical spaces for students of color are an expression of what institutions value.

University leaders need to clarify institutional values. If students of color are important to the institution, what are the visible elements that show institutional support? In additional to physical spaces and structures like cultural centers, institutions must also employ faculty and staff of color who students of color can connect with and develop relationships (Luedke, 2017), which creates opportunities for mentoring and connections to the institution. Institutions without cultural spaces need to find a way to create them. Cultural spaces provide an institution with the opportunity to maximize student success through students' interaction with a physical space and associated resources (Kuh, Schuh, Kinzie, Whitt, & Associates, 2005). Programs, services, and

physical spaces are important resources in the work with students of color. Student affairs professionals are also an important resource, who need training to understand the challenges that come with working with students of color.

Senior institutional leaders cannot assume that all professionals of color are right for an institution or working with students of color. Professionals must disrupt power structures and help students dismantle as well. Rather than thinking we accept students of color, we should understand that students of color accept their admittance to the institution. Providing resources expresses a commitment to social justice. Resources actualize diversity, ensuring students have relationships, programs, and services that can assist them through historically oppressive and marginalizing campus environments. Faculty and staff of color are needed to foster connections with students of color (Luedke, 2017). Adding more students of color without additional resources perpetuates oppressive and marginalizing environments, implying these students are not worthy of sufficient resources. Institutions that enroll more students of color must allocate resources to serve those students.

Acknowledging the needs and identities of people of color. In addition to having sufficient resources that express a commitment to social justice, it is also important for institutional leaders to understand the needs and identities of people of color. Failing to acknowledge the needs and identities of students and people of color is harmful (Harper, 2012; Huber & Solórzano, 2014; Minikel-Lacocque, 2013) and communicates to people of color they are less than, or do not matter. Through the portraits, I shared the experiences of each participant, eight of which identified as a people of color. Participant's experiences were highly influenced by their own identities and the identities of their students. Working with students of color as a professional of color included numerous challenges, including feeling an obligation to

mother students, as Tyra described, and navigating the intensity and exhaustion of the work, as Cathy described. The needs and identities of people and professionals of color must be addressed.

The focus on relationships across the participants' narratives and the need for community also warrants the exploration of power dynamics within institutions of higher education. Many of the participants described the importance of relationships with mentors, colleagues, significant others; however, supervisors were not as consistently mentioned. The dynamic of power between professionals and their supervisors must be examined as a way to ensure professionals' needs and identities are supported. Cathy addressed this dynamic, noting a situation where she addressed the comments of a colleague's supervisor. Relationships provided a form of counter-spaces for the participants (Solórzano, et al., 2000), spaces to provide an escape from the challenges of the institutional culture. The participant portraits described the counter-spaces the professional created, in addition to their counter-narratives, their lived experiences of racism and marginalization Dixson, & Rousseau, 2005; Museus, et al., 2012; Solórzano, et al., 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Acknowledgment of the identities and experiences of people of color by senior leaders communicates an appreciation for the experiences and knowledge of professionals of color (Museus, et al., 2012; Yosso, et al., 2009). Rather than forcing professionals to create their own spaces in reaction to what they are not receiving form the institution, senior leadership needs to look more closely at the needs of professionals of color. Senior leaders must also work to address those needs, which can include opportunities to build community, and physical space to gather. In addition to seeking recognition for people of color and their identities, student affairs professionals must also question how student affairs programs are a part of preparing professionals for working with students and people of color.

Student Affairs Preparation

HESA graduate programs do not provide student affairs professionals with all the knowledge or skills they may use in practice (Cuyjet, Longwell-Grice, & Molina, 2009). Further, faculty and senior student affairs leaders contest which skills are most important (Dickerson, et al., 2011; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). There is room for conversation about preparation programs and the delivery of content around diversity related topics (Mueller & Pope, 2003). While appreciating their experiences, few participants described their graduate program as a source of preparation for work with students of color. The participants also described aspects of their programs which prepared them well for student affairs work. While some programs or elements of program do not need revision, there is an opportunity to help professionals explore what this work can look like in classrooms, in assistantships, and in professional roles.

Student affairs professionals must understand how racism, oppression, and microaggression manifest within institutions of higher education. HESA programs can and must expose students to the realities of working with students of color and how racism will influence their work. Knowledge of racism, power, and oppression is necessary to confront the subtle verbal and non-verbal disparaging behavior and remarks that affect students through microaggressions (McCabe, 2009; Nadal, et al., 2014; Solórzano, et al., 2000; Sue, 2010a, 2010b). More conversations about racism, oppressions, and power structures are one approach for increasing professionals' ability to confront these topics. For example, Cathy shared a moment from her graduate program, where she called out her peers who were not engaging, naming each individual as an agent of the institution with a responsibility to act and support students of color.

An intentional effort must focus on pathways into the field of student affairs. In this study, all the participants shared about their discovery of student affairs. Except for Sean, the participants found student affairs later in their undergraduate experiences, falling into the field rather than deliberately choosing it as a pathway. There is immense opportunity to guide and mentor students into student affairs roles throughout their collegiate experiences. With intentional mentorship and guidance future student affairs professionals can acquire experiences that further prepare and support them in student affairs work. Future professionals, students, and the student affairs field can all benefit from intentional efforts to share the profession with new generations of professionals.

The participants of the study described their graduate programs as not enough, lacking depth in discussions about racism and oppression and neglecting strategies for practice. HESA programs must provide more opportunities to discuss the complexities of racism and oppression. Further programs need to offer practical opportunities for students to gain competency in working with students in racist and oppressive situations, much like counseling students who engage in clinical preparation. A master's degree is not sufficient preparation for student affairs professionals who work with students of color or attempt to address diversity and social justice issues (Cuyjet, et al., 2009; Dickerson, et al., 2011). Faculty in HESA programs graduate preparation need to recognize the classroom as an environment to re-socialize future professionals with greater attention on understanding power and privilege (Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Kelley & Gayles, 2010). Faculty can use their position of power to help students learn more about racism, to co-construct knowledge of how to identify and call-out oppressive environments in practice. In addition to the academic experiences of HESA programs, student affairs preparation allows professionals space to explore and understand their own identities.

Identity development of student affairs professionals. The identity development of student affairs professionals is an integral component of working with students of color. HESA programs must help professionals explore their identities to best work with students of color. Several of the participants discussed student development theory and the absence of theories that represent the diverse students, which informed the participants' work, but also their identity development. Theories based upon non-diverse populations still have utility; however, student affairs professionals need a new cadre of representative and inclusive describing theories to inform their work with students of color. Student development theory is a component of graduate programs, but also a tool to help graduate students and professionals reflect on their own identity development. Theory is both formal and informal in student affairs practice. Formal theory, which the participants discussed in their stories includes specific models and theorists learned in a formal setting, whereas informal theories are the ideas, thoughts, and practices professionals use to respond to situations with students (Love, 2012; Reason & Kimball, 2012). The professionals in this study discussed their desire for more formal theories to identify with students of color. Further conversation can focus on how to use formal and informal theories to fill what the identified gap.

Professionals of Color Working with Students of Color

In this study, eight of the nine participants identified as people of color, shifting the focus from student affairs professionals to student affairs professionals of color. It is important to acknowledge the participations of this study are predominantly people of color. A central tenet of CRT includes the incorporation of a transdisciplinary perspective that highlights the influence of race in organizational structures, policy, and personal experience through the perspective of marginalized individuals (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Museus, et al., 2012; Yosso, et al., 2009).

This study provided the opportunity to weave the stories of eight professionals of color together in a way that highlighted the perspective of marginalized identities, ensuring their inclusions in this scholarship (Appadurai, 2006; Clandinin & Huber, 2002; Delgado, 1989; Hones, 1998; Solórzano, & Yosso, 2002).

With the majority of participants identifying as people of color, this study shares the perspective of individuals who have historically been excluded from research. Like students of color, professionals of color also need a community of support to continue in their work. Relationships were instrumental in how each participant developed their approach to working with students of color. Senior leaders must recognize the resource that is available through professionals of color in their institutions. Professionals of color can relate to students of color in ways that White professionals cannot. Brenda articulated this sentiment as a White-identifying professional, recognizing there are certain instances where she cannot relate to students of color. The findings of this study also mean that greater attention must be placed on understanding how White professionals approach working with students of color and how they support their professionals of color in dismantling racism and oppressive environments. Further research will necessary to contextualize the experiences of the participations to the field of student affairs and to the approaches of White student affairs professionals.

Considerations for Further Research

I designed this study to explore how student affairs professionals work with students of color. Prior to beginning the study, I assumed the participants in this story would focus heavily on challenges of their work. While all the participants shared challenges, there was a deep affinity for engaging students of color. I also expected the narratives would focus heavily on microaggressions and racialized experiences. Microaggressions were present, but not at the

forefront. With these assumptions in mind, I intentionally shared the opportunity to participate in the study with people of color by reaching out to professionals and asking colleagues to recommend individuals who identify as people of color to participate. Eight of the nine participants identified as people of color. The identities of the participants are an important consideration. With a majority of the participants identifying as people of color, the study provides perspectives from professionals of color about working with students of color, but does not provide as much perspective from White professionals. Further research can and should understand how White professionals work with students of color. White student affairs professionals are an important population for future research. White professionals also work with students of color and may have distinctly different perspectives as a result of their identities. Future research can explore the challenges of working with students of color as a White professional. While one participant in this study identifies as a White woman and named how her identity complicates her interactions with students of color, greater perspective is needed.

Of the nine participants, only one participant identified as a new professional. The experiences shared within this study overly represent mid-level professionals, which in this study identifies professionals with more than three years of full-time experience. For this study, I intentionally excluded participation of senior student affairs professionals based upon a higher prevalence of senior or chief student affairs professionals in current literature and research (Bensimon, 2007; Cuyjet, et al., 2009; Dickerson, et al., 2011). Focusing on new student affairs professionals is a direction for future research that can amplify the perspective of newer student affairs professionals. More specifically, future research can explore the support new professionals need to engage in work with students of color. Many of the participants identified areas where they felt unprepared or needed further knowledge and preparation. Conducting

future research on new professionals can help to identify strategies to provide the knowledge and experiences the participants of this study described as lacking or insufficient.

Participants shared perspective and critiques about their graduate experiences. Many programs combine academic coursework with assistantships and internships. Further research can explore the nuance of programs and how students can leverage their experiences, specifically within coursework, to gain knowledge and skills that will directly influence their work with students of color. Students in higher education change, which requires professionals to grow and evolve to meet their needs; student affairs programs should also change in response. Graduate preparation programs offer an opportunity to help professionals understand how to critique knowledge in practice, to be able to name and question instances of racism, power, oppression. It is important that graduate programs utilize critiques like those provided by the participants to ensure knowledge and skills are being shared that can the ways professionals support students of color and to acknowledge what pieces of knowledge or experience informs professionals' approaches.

Mentorship and supporting relationship are another area for future research. The majority of participants discussed mentors, colleagues, or friends that encouraged them to pursue student affairs, or shaped how they act in their roles. One of my questions for this study focused on understanding what informed the approaches of the participants in their work with students of color. Guidance from mentors was a resounding response to this question. Mentors guided the participants through understanding how their identities influenced work with students of color, and also provided support through the traumatic and burdensome work. Further research can explore the nuance of how mentors and supporting relationships provide guidance to

professionals. Additional focus can explore how these relationships begin, and how the presence or absence of these relationships affects how professionals support students of color.

Conclusion

Diversity and inclusion in higher education continue to be relevant issues (Airaksinen, 2017; Berrien, 2017; Cuyjet, Linder, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2016; Haag, 2018; Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Quintana, 2017). Deepening the knowledge and skill of student affairs professionals who work with students of color in increasingly diverse college environments remains important. The participants' stories affirm the need for the student affairs profession to invest in the preparation of professionals and to value their experiences. Reviewing themes from the participants affirmed the importance of acknowledging the participant's student affairs story and that significant works remains.

Further research can enhance the knowledge and perspective of other student affairs professionals who work with students of color. Concurrent with deepening an understanding of how professionals work with students of color, professionals and scholars should place attention on understanding the structures and processes that sustain oppression and marginalization for students of color. The point of this study is not to create generalizable findings, but rather to understand the participants' perspectives, as told through their narratives. Each of the participant's stories present unique experiences about working with students of color in predominantly and historically White institutions of higher education. Through their stories, the participants shared how they informed their approach and insights about working with students of color daily. Student affairs profession can learn from the perspective of each participant and can engage in thoughtful and critical reflection about what it means to work with students of color and how we can better prepare professionals for this work.

Earlier, I discussed how students are voicing their dissent with how institutions and leaders are responding to racism. The continued focus on race and racism in society and higher education necessitates the ability of student affairs professionals to support students of color. Perspective gained from the nine professionals in this study communicates the importance of understanding race in practice, and understanding how each professional's experiences influence the ways they engage students of color. At the onset of this study, I sought to answer two questions: In what ways do student affairs professional support students of color within the campus environment at predominantly and historically white institutions? What informs student affairs educators' approaches to supporting students of color within the campus environment? Responses from the participants indicate that professionals support students in a variety of ways: one-on-one conversations, being present at events, advocating with senior leaders, buying students food, and understanding the influence of race. The approaches of professionals are informed by their story, their experiences, and the people with whom they interact.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment E-mail – Targeted Recruitment

Hello [Name of Colleague],

I hope this message finds you doing well. I am a doctoral candidate in the College Student Affairs Administration program at the University of Georgia beginning my dissertation study, in partial satisfaction of requirements for my degree program. I am completing my dissertation, under the supervision of Dr. Chris Linder. I am reaching out to invite you to participate in my dissertation study: Professional Perspectives: Exploring How Student Affairs Professionals Approach Working with Students of Color.

For the study, I am seeking the perspective of student affairs professionals who work with students of color. More specifically, I am seeking professionals who meet the following criteria:
- Currently employed full-time at a college/university as a student affairs professional
- Identify as an entry or mid-level professional, with at least 1-year of full-time experience in student affairs post graduate degree (i.e. Master's)
- Be willing to participate in 2 interviews (approximately 30-60 minutes; the 1st interview will most likely be lengthier)
- Review transcripts from your interviews and provide your interpretations of discussions and findings

As part of the study, I will be asking each participant to select an artifact to assist in the first interview. The artifact is an item of your choosing and is intended to connect to a larger story about each participant's work with students of color. More details will be provided to participants.

All information provided throughout the study will be kept confidential and accessible only to the Principle Investigator of the study, Dr. Chris Linder, and me. Participation is voluntary; at any point participants can refuse to answer questions or choose not to pursue participation in the study. Participation in this study will involve two interviews, the first interview lasting approximately sixty (60) minutes and the second interview lasting between thirty (30) and sixty (60) minutes, depending upon the participant. The second interview will serve as a follow-up to the first interview.

If you are interested in participating or if you know of individuals who may have an interest in participating, or have further questions regarding the study, please contact me via e-mail: jfitzer@uga.edu.

Sincerely,
Jason R. Fitzer

APPENDIX B

Recruitment E-mail – General or Referred Recruitment

Hello [Name],
I hope this message finds you doing well. I am currently a doctoral candidate in the College Student Affairs Administration program at the University of Georgia. I am collecting data for my dissertation: Professional Perspectives: Exploring How Student Affairs Professionals Approach Working with Students of Color, under the supervision of Dr. Chris Linder.

[Name of Colleague] encouraged me to reach of to you and invite you to participate in my dissertation study. For the study, I am seeking the perspective of student affairs professionals work with students of color.

I am seeking student affairs professionals who meet the following criteria:
- Currently employed at a college/university as a student affairs professional
- Identify as an entry or mid-level professional, with at least 1-year of full-time experience in student affairs post graduate degree (i.e. Master's)
- Be willing to participate in 2 interviews (approximately 30-60 minutes; the 1st interview will most likely be lengthier)
- Review transcripts from your interviews and provide your interpretations of discussions and findings

Before participating in the study, I will be asking each participant to select an artifact to assist in the first interview. The artifact is an item of your choosing and is intended to connect to a larger story about each participant's work with students of color. More details will be provided to should you choose to participate.

All information provided throughout the study will be kept confidential and accessible only to the Principle Investigator of the study, Dr. Chris Linder, and me. Participation is voluntary; at any point participants can refuse to answer questions or choose not to pursue participation in the study. Participation in this study will involve two interviews, the first interview lasting approximately sixty (60) minutes and the second interview lasting between thirty (30) and sixty (60) minutes, depending upon the participant. The second interview will serve as a follow-up to the first interview.

If you are interested in participating or if you know of individuals who may have an interest in participating, or have further questions regarding the study, please contact me via e-mail: jfitzer@uga.edu.

Sincerely,
Jason R. Fitzer

APPENDIX C

Recruitment Graphic

Research Study

Seeking
SA Pros' Perspectives @
Working with Students of
Color

Are you currently employed in
a college/university as an
entry to mid-level student
affairs professional ?
CONDSIDER PARTICIPATING
AND SHARING YOUR
EXPERIENCES!

Participation will include two
(2) interviews approximately
30-60 minutes each and
review of transcripts and
themes from the interviews.
Interested? Contact Jason
Fitzer at jfitzer@uga.edu for
more information!
This study has been approved by the IRB at UGA.

APPENDIX D

Demographic Information and Participant Consent*

*Participants will complete this form electronically.

University of Georgia

Participant Demographic Information

   I.   Name
   II. Gender Identity
   III. Race/Ethnicity
   IV. Identity/ies
        Please provide the elements of your identity that are most important to who you are and
        how you represent yourself to others.
   V.   Years of Full-time Student Affairs Professional Practice *
         • 1-3 years
         • 3-5 years
         • 5-7 years
         • 7-9 years
         • 10-15 years
         • * Participation will be limited to entry and mid-level professionals
   VI. Highest Level of Education
         o Masters (MA, MS, MEd, etc.)
         o PhD/EdD
         o JD
         o Other
   VII. Educational Course of study

Participant Consent

Researcher's Statement
We are asking you to take part in a research study: Professional Perspectives: Exploring How
Student Affairs Professionals Approach Working with Students of Color. Before you decide to
participate in this study, it is important that you understand why the research is being conducted
and what steps are involved as part of the study. This form is designed to provide you with
information about the study, so you can make an informed decision regarding your choice to
participate or not.

Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there
is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been

answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of this form will be given to you.

Primary Contact:
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Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to understand how student affairs professionals approach working with students of color.

Participation Criteria
Participants must meet the following criteria to participate further in this study:
- Currently employed at a college/university as a student affairs professional
- Have at least 1-year of full-time experience in student affairs post graduate degree (i.e. Master's)
- Be willing to participate in 2 interviews (approximately 30-60 minutes; the 1st interview will most likely be lengthier)
- Review transcripts from your interviews and provide your interpretations of discussions and findings

Study Procedure
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to:
1. Express interest to participate in the study by e-mailing the primary contact (Jason Fitzer) for the research study.
2. Review and provide consent to participate in the study.
3. Complete a participant questionnaire to determine eligibility to participate in the study along with information regarding selection on an artifact to be described during the first interview.
   a. For this study, you will be asked to select an artifact that connects to a specific experience where you have supported students of color. During the first interview, you will be asked to describe your selected artifact, including why you selected it and what experience/story is associated with the artifact. An artifact is any object of your choosing. It may be a photograph, a note or gift from a student, an event

flyer/program, an event itself, or a university tradition. An example of an artifact that connects to a story might be a picture with a group of students taken after a diversity march on campus, where you served as the advisor to the students in the picture.

4. Respond to a request to identify day/time for the first interview.
5. Participate in two one-to-one interview(s) with the researcher. Interviews will include an audio recording of the interview through a digital recording device. The interviewer may also hand-write notes during the interview process.
    a. During the first interview, an overview of the study will be provided (as a follow-up to previously received information and the content of this form).
    b. The second interview will be a follow-up to the first interview. Participants will also be asked to reflect upon and discuss the following question: What does your story (of supporting students of color) mean?
    c. Information will be received electronically via e-mail as follow-up to schedule and/or confirm the date, time, and location of the second interview.
6. Following the conclusion of each interview, you will be asked to review transcripts of your interviews, including initial thoughts from the researcher.
7. Your participation in the study concludes.

Benefits
The information in this study may advance knowledge relating to the preparation of student affairs professionals and supporting students of color through their college experiences; however, you are not being offered/will not receive a direct personal benefit will result from this study.

Audio Recording
As a participant in this study, audio recording devices will be utilized to capture all one-on-one interviews. Audio recordings will be utilized to create transcripts of the interview, which will be utilized for data analysis proceedings to inform the direction of this study. All audio files will be destroyed/deleted upon completion of the study.

Please respond (by selecting) to the following statement to acknowledge the use of audio recording and photography as part of the study's procedures.

- I am aware an audio recording will be utilized to capture any and all interviews throughout the study and I am willing to be recorded.

Privacy/Confidentiality
The data resulting from participation will be treated anonymously, with all participants provided with a pseudonym. Identifying names and/or characteristics will be removed, unless participatory consent is given to include identifying information.

Voluntary Participation
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose to refuse to participate before the study begins, or discontinue your participation at any time. Discontinuing your participation will come at no loss of benefit to you. Should you discontinue your participation at any point, for any reason, collected data from your participation, the information/data collected from or about you

up to the point of your withdrawal may be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed.

Questions

The main researcher conducting this study is Jason R. Fitzer, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia. The study is being conducted under the direction of Dr. Chris Linder in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services. If you have questions later, you may contact Jason via e-mail at jfitzer@uga.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, please select an option below to indicate your intent for further participation. If you choose to agree to participate in this study, you acknowledge you have read the information described in this consent document and agree to participate in the study. Additional information will be provided in a follow-up e-mail with further instructions regarding your participation. If you choose decline participation, you will not receive any further communication related to this study and your participation will conclude upon submission of this consent document.

- Yes, I consent to participate in this study
- No, I do not want to participate in this study

APPENDIX E

Instructions for Participation

Hello [Name],
Thank you for your interest in participating in the study and for completing the demographic questionnaire and participant consent form. If you have any questions about the information contained in the form as we move forward, please do not hesitate to contact me and ask.

This e-mail contains information about your participation, specifically the first interview. Prior to the first interview, there are a few steps that I would like you to complete. In the first interview, we will be discussing an artifact, of your choosing, that represents how you support students of color through your practice as a student affairs professional, prior to the first interview. You may be wondering what I mean by *artifact*. An artifact can be a few things. Your artifact can be a copy of an institutional policy, a student or institutional event, an institutional ritual such as a cultural graduation celebration, a photograph, or any objects that holds meaning for you as the participant. Please select the artifact in advance of the first meeting and plan to have it with you, if possible. If you need further clarification, please let me know.

Once you have identified your artifact, please provide a picture and/or detailed description of your artifact [link to electronic submission form]. Being able to see or know what your artifact is will help me tailor my questions to the artifact you have chosen. Finally, please use the following link to provide your availability, which will be used to select a mutually available time for the first interview [link to interview schedule selection].

I will provide information about the remaining steps in the study as part of the first interview. If questions arise at any point, please let me know. I am excited about your participation in this study, and I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,
Jason R. Fitzer

APPENDIX F

First Interview Protocol

Hello [Participant's Pseudonym],

Thank you for agreeing to participant in the study! As a reminder, my name is Jason Fitzer, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia, in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services, completing my Ph.D. in College Student Affairs Administration. This interview is part of my dissertation study, Professional Perspectives: Exploring How Student Affairs Professionals Approach Working with Students of Color.

Before we begin with the questions for this interview, I would like to review several aspects of the Participant Consent Form and process. You have already completed the Participant Consent form, electronically, but if you have any questions, you may ask those during this portion of the interview as well. As detailed in the Consent Form, your participation in this study is voluntary; you may choose to end your participation at any point. Should you choose to no longer participate, you only need to express your interest to conclude participation. Participation will consist of two (2) interviews ranging from 30-60 minutes each. Each interview will be recorded and transcribed. Once each interview is transcribed, you will receive a copy and will be asked/encouraged to review the transcript to ensure your story is <u>accurately</u> captured. I will also present initial thoughts about your interviews to obtain your thoughts.

Do you have any questions before we begin the interview?

Semi-Structured Flow of Questions:
  I.   Introduction
        a. Researcher Introduction
              i.   Doctoral Candidate in College Student Affairs Administration
              ii. My interest in this study and my research agenda
              iii. Review language used and provide definitions/explanations, as necessary
 II.   1:1 Interview*
        a. The first couple of questions will ask you about your current role and how you chose the field of student affairs
              i.   What is your student affairs story?
                     1. How did you discover the field to student affairs and why did you choose to work in this profession?
                     2. How did you "prepare" to become a student affairs professional?
              ii. Can you describe your current role?
              iii. Based upon your description of your current role, how do you interact with students of color within your institution?

     1. What is your positionality? What experiences or perspectives inform your approach?

   b. Artifact: The next set of questions will ask you about your selected artifact. I have reviewed the description/visual and have questions based upon that information as well.

     i. Can you describe your artifact?

     ii. Participant-specific questions based upon their artifact

   c. Based upon your artifact and the associated experience:

     i. What context does your artifact provide about campus environments within your institution?

     ii. What connection exists between your chosen artifact and how approach supporting students of color?

     iii. What elements of your graduate preparation prepared you to support students of color?

     iv. What professional experiences have you acquired that inform how you support students of color?

     v. What experiences have informed your approach?

      1. How was privilege a part of your experiences?

   d. With the next set of questions, I will focus on the culture and administration of your institution.

     i. How would you describe the culture of your institution?

      1. What can you infer about the role of racism in the campus culture?

      2. What is the institutional perspective about students of color and supporting their experience(s)?

      3. How is the value/importance of diversity actualized?

     ii. How are you supported or encouraged by your institution to work with students of color?

      1. Are you able to be responsive to the needs and experiences of students of color?

     iii. Are there institutional challenges that inform or inhibit how you support students of color?

   e. Finally, how do you think your own identities influence your ability and/or interest in supporting students of color within your institution?

III. Review Next Steps in the Study

   a. Review of Transcribed Interview/Narrative

   b. Review of Researcher Analysis of Transcribed Interview

   c. Participant Analysis of Interview

     i. Please consider a response to the following question before the next interview:

      1. What does your story/experience (of supporting students of color) mean to/for you?

   d. Findings/Themes

IV. Closing

   a. Thank you

*Due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, each interview will be unique to each participant and I will not ask all questions listed in this protocol in every interview.

APPENDIX G

Second Interview Protocol

Hello [Participant's Pseudonym],

Thank you for your continued participation in the study. As I mentioned during the end of the first interview, today we will be discussing your response to the provided reflection question. I also have some follow-up questions based upon the information you shared from your first interview.

Before we the interview begins, do you have any questions or comments?

Semi-Structured Flow of Questions:
  I. Reflection Question
       a. What does your story/experience (of working with students of color) mean to/for you?
  II. Follow-up Questions*
       a. I will develop questions after each interview has been transcribed and reviewed, to tailor questions to each participant's narrative
       b. Questions will focus on exploring elements shared in the participant's narrative, which may include the exploration of intersectionality and racial identity for the students described in the participant's narrative. Questions may also explore how the participant interacts with students of different racial backgrounds.
  III. Review of First Interview Themes
       a. After a review of my initial themes from your first interview, do you have any discrepancies?
       b. What did you find similar?
       c. How has my identification of power and privilege in your narrative informed your perspective, if at all?
  IV. Review Finals Steps in the Study
       a. Receive and review transcript of this interview via e-mail.
       b. Receive and review initial themes of this interview via e-mail.
       c. Participation concludes.
  V. Closing
       a. Questions
Thank you for your participation; I sincerely appreciate it! If you have questions, at any point, please reach out and let me know.
*Due to the semi-structured nature of the interview, each interview will be unique to each participant and I will not ask all questions listed in this protocol in every interview. I may also not ask all questions that I have developed, based upon the flow of the interview and/or available time.