A NARRATIVE EXPLORATION OF RACIALLY MINORITIZED MID-LEVEL

STUDENT AFFAIRS ADMINISTRATORS

A Dissertation

by

KEVIN J. BAZNER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Chair of Committee,	Christine A. Stanley
Committee Members,	Frank B. Ashley, III
	Chayla Haynes Davison
	Vicente M. Lechuga
Head of Department,	Mario S. Torres

August 2020

Major Subject: Educational Administration

ABSTRACT

Despite the increasing racial diversity among college students, student affairs administrators overwhelmingly remain white. The scarcity of student affairs professionals of color poses a serious challenge to diversity and social justice efforts in college and universities who desire to build more supportive environments for students. Moreover, experiences of a critical group, the mid-level administrator, continues to be largely absent from the published organizational and higher education literature. Mid-level administrators are tasked with navigating hierarchical power differences among relationships with their supervisors, supervisees, and peers which leads to a challenging task often complicating workplace experience. Yet, research on leadership and organizational power often center white experiences and view leadership or followership in isolation. It also neglects the nuance of experiences of power from those having to do navigate organizations from the middle. As such, this study sought gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators.

Through the lens of critical race theory and approach/inhibition/avoidance theory of power the narratives of seven administrators across the United States were explored. Participant narratives illustrated how individuals interact across the institution with supervisors, supervisees, students, and colleagues. Participants discussed the role of the local community and perceptions of racism from the surrounding area in which they live and further illuminated the impact of racism on their work and how they managed to

cope. Finally, participants highlighted the ways racism and whiteness in the field of student affairs is reinforced through professional socialization and practice.

This research highlights racism does not simply occur in student affairs administrative work but is baked into the process of student affairs. The findings from this study contribute to a limited body of knowledge that explicitly focuses on a crucial yet overlooked group of student affairs professionals. This study opens new lines of inquiry and how race and racism must be integrated into broader organizational analyses. Findings further illustrate the importance of recognizing implicit behaviors that serve to reinforce dominant white organizational norms.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to Gabriel, Jackie, Jackson-Evans, Jesús, Lauren, T. J., and Yvette (pseudonyms), the seven participants in this study. You know who you are, and I cannot thank you enough for trusting me with your stories. Your narratives are powerful and hope this dissertation serves as another platform to elevate your voices to a wider audience who need to hear them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My journey to completing this degree has been graced by so many wonderful people that I will be forever grateful. Much credit and gratitude goes to my amazing dissertation chair, Dr. Christine Stanley. From the first time I walked into your office, to the countless pop-in conversations about school, life or the ducks, your wisdom, experience, and humor kept me going. Even though I may have avoided walking by your office to dodge some accountability at times, you were the supervisor and mentor I needed to finish this degree. I can only hope that all future graduate students, no matter where they exist, have someone like you in their corner.

I would also like to thank each of my incredible committee members who guided and challenged me along the way. Dr. Frank Ashley, your willingness to share your time and talents with me means a lot. I always looked forward the "What Would You Do?" videos in class or the stories you shared during our one-on-one meetings. I am grateful for your encouragement and your openness during this journey. Dr. Chayla Haynes Davison, I am so incredibly fortunate to have been supported and mentored by you. "It's all preparation" was your mantra and it has certainly prepared me to search for learning moments in every experience I have had along the way. I am extremely grateful to have been invited to study under you and write alongside of you. I am a better scholar because of you. Dr. Vincente Lechuga, I am so lucky to have found someone I got along with so well and willing to entertain the random conversations that ran through my head. I am so

appreciative of being able to teach alongside of you and will miss dearly our regular Starbucks and Café Eccell outings to talk about everything and anything.

To my amazing support network in EAHR, including Dr. Torres, Marie Shelfer, and Kerri Smith for your leadership, dedication, and unwavering support of students. Your efforts do not go unnoticed and I always appreciated your open doors to listen. To all the amazing graduate students turned friends for the community and support you have provided me and each other over the years. The stress of graduate school can take its toll on you without a supportive community around you, and I am so lucky to have such amazing colleagues. A special shout out to my academic hermano, Juan Lopez for countless conversations and camaraderie as we pushed through this journey together.

To my writing partner in crime, Sarah Ray, I would not have been able to finish this dissertation without your support. Not only am I lucky to have found someone willing to put up with me just as much as Greg, but also someone with similar taste for charcuterie and wine to support our writing habits. I look forward to continuing our writing sessions well into the future (in-person or virtually).

To my former "work-wife" Cammie, a.k.a Marie, your friendship was a driving motivation behind me pursuing my Ph.D. and being so committed to completing this dissertation. Yes, I may have been the most difficult person you've supervised, but I know I am a better human for having you in my life. Ted will always have your back!

To my family, especially my mother and father, who sacrificed so much over the years to provide an environment where I was able to become the first in the family to attend college and eventually graduate with a Ph.D.

Finally, my deepest gratitude is reserved for my partner and husband, Greg. Even if you didn't know exactly what I was going through or what I needed, you were patient and my constant form of support. You sacrificed endless hours editing papers or drafts of this dissertation. You opened countless bottles of wine and you became my biggest champion during this journey.

While it is impossible for me to thank everyone that supported me along this journey, know I could not have completed this degree without the imprint you have had on my life. Thank you.

CONTRIBUTORS AND FUNDING SOURCES

NOMENCLATURE

ACPA   American College Personnel Association

AIA   Approach/Inhibition/Avoidance Theory of Power

CRT   Critical Race Theory

GA   Graduate Assistant

NASPA   Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

PWI   Predominantly White Institution

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Despite the increasing racial diversity among college students, student affairs administrators overwhelmingly remain white. Currently, racially minoritized students account for roughly 46 percent of undergraduate enrollment in the United States. However, an overwhelming 71 percent of whites held positions across all student affairs administrative roles and currently held 77 percent of senior student affairs administrative positions (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018). The scarcity of student affairs professionals of color poses a serious challenge to diversity and social justice efforts in college and universities who desire to build more supportive environments for students. Moreover, experiences of a critical group, the mid-level administrator, continues to be absent from the published organizational and higher education literature (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017; Caye et al., 2010; Clayborne, & Hamrick, 2007; Rosser, 2000; Rosser, 2004; Young, 1990).

Mid-level student affairs administrators continue to be the largest classification among higher education professionals (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018; Rosser, 2000). They are responsible for overseeing entire program areas, supervising large amounts of staff, and are exposed to senior-level administrative conversations (Young, 1990). According to McClellan (2012), mid-level professionals "hold just enough power to be responsible, but not enough to be in control." They are often charged with implementing new programs and services, or interpreting and explaining policy, but may not be

involved with setting budgets or creating the policy (Belch & Strange, 1995; McClellan, 2012; Mills, 2009).

Mid-level administrators occupy a crucial, yet thankless job overlooked by researchers and higher education institutional leaders. They are tasked with navigating hierarchical power differences among relationships with their supervisors, supervisees, and peers which leads to a challenging task often complicating workplace experiences (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017). However, these nuanced experiences cannot be viewed in a vacuum and challenged from colorblind perspectives without acknowledging the role of racism and white supremacy in higher education and colorblind logic in organizational theorizing (Patton, 2016; Wilder, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

White middle-class men have been a defining group for many organizational and higher educational theories (Parker, 2004; Schwartz & Stewart, 2017). Moreover, research on leadership and organizational power, often view leadership or followership in isolation and neglect the nuance of intersectional experiences of power from those having to do both (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017). This void provides a rather incomplete picture of the diversity of administrative experiences that exists within student affairs and forwards a colorblind logic of organizational theorizing (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Mid-level administrators in student affairs is an area of higher education that has gone relatively underexplored (Rosser, 2004; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Young, 1990). Even more scarce is research specifically understanding the experiences of racially/ethnically

minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators working at predominantly white

institutions (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007).

Extant literature exists documenting the experiences of racially minoritized

students and faculty at predominantly white institutions. For example, Harper and

Hurtado (2007) reviewed 15 years of campus climate research highlighting the

experiences students of color had with racialized microaggressions from their white

peers and white faculty members, concluding students often felt like "guests in someone

else's house" (p. 20). Additionally, a lack of programming and support networks stood

as a major barrier to feeling included at predominantly white institutions.

Similarly, a growing body of research has also focused on the perceptions of

racially/ethnically minoritized faculty and the metaphorical landmines they navigate,

such as justifying the value of their scholarship, additional unpaid labor endured serving

on committees, mentoring racially/ethnically minoritized students, and the dissonance

between institutional speech and practice (i.e. the professed values of diversity and

inclusion and the actual experiences of minoritized individuals across higher education)

(e.g. Croom & Patton, 2011; Harper, 2012; Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009;

Stanley, 2006). Research on the racialized experiences of university administrators,

particularly student affairs administrators', however, is more limited.

Published research documenting experiences among racially/ethnically

minoritized student affairs administrators does exist but is largely limited to an

examination of graduate students (Harris & Linder, 2018), entry-level/new professionals

(Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008), or senior administrators (Jackson & Flowers, 2003). Even

more scarce is research specifically understanding the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators working at predominantly white institutions (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007). For example, Kile and Jackson (2009) found student affairs administrators to be represented in only 18 of 78 studies (23%) over a 10-year period. Only 3 (<4%) of those studies, however, explored topics associated with race/ethnicity relating to student affairs administrators. These studies did not explore the impact or ongoing persistence of issues of racism/white supremacy or discrimination faced by minoritized administrators. Harper (2012) made a similar observation of an absence of an explicit conversation of racism in the higher education literature, particularly in relation to studies about the organizational structure and leadership of higher education institutions.

Organizational and higher education literature more clearly documents the perceptions of campus racial climate, experiences of racism, and battles racially minoritized students encounter within higher education institutions (e.g. Cabrera, Nora, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Hagedorn, 1999; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper, Smith, & Davis, 2016; Truong, McMickens, & Brown, 2015). Largely missing from the conversation of campus climate and inclusion are the racialized experiences of student affairs administrators, particularly at the mid-level range.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators working at predominantly white institutions. This purpose will illuminate how identity and

positional power dynamics affect the navigation of student advocacy, staff supervision, institutional politics, and the overall work environment. Centering the experiences of professionals of color is intentional, as their narratives and voices have been historically marginalized and not included in the canon of higher education and student affairs literature. Additionally, they are most equipped to share perspectives of how their experiences impact the work of student affairs professionals working in predominantly white institutions. As such, this study is guided by three overarching research questions:

1. What are the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators working at predominantly white institutions?

2. How do these experiences impact the work and interactions of these administrator's with colleagues and students?

3. What ways are racist structures reinforced or disrupted in student affairs work?

These questions seek to develop more nuanced understanding of the experiences for racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators within predominantly white institutions and illuminate ways in which racism and white supremacy continue to operate within higher education. To do this, I ask participants to share their student affairs journey and work experiences as I listen and co-construct meaning of these stories (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Significance of the Study

Student affairs administrators, particularly racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level administrators serve a critical role in developing campus environments that are

5

more inclusive and representative of diverse student populations (Flowers, 2003; Gaston Gayles & Kelly, 2007; Jackson, 2004). In recent years, more research has emerged highlighting the importance of administrative work that contributes to the greater mission of an institution such as student and faculty recruitment, retention, and satisfaction (Kile & Jackson, 2009). Whereas many entry-level or younger professionals within student affairs lack the institutional knowledge or the political acumen to navigate divisional and institutional politics (Kezar, 2016; Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008), administrators in mid-level roles are better positioned in terms of proximity to influence decisions and shape campus environments (McClellan, 2012; Mills, 2009; Schuh, Jones, & Torres, 2016) yet are a critical group often neglected by research and organizational leaders (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017; Caye et al., 2010).

Wolfe and Freeman (2013) assert, the underrepresentation of student affairs administrators of color is perhaps one of the more pressing challenges facing colleges and universities today. Racially minoritized students account for 46 percent of the undergraduate enrollment population yet student affairs leadership is comprised of an overwhelming 77% of whites in senior positions (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018). As college student enrollment continues to become more racially diverse than ever before, students require both faculty *and* administrative staff reflecting the diversifying student demographics.

Findings from this study have the potential to improve inclusive administrative practices in student affairs work and uncover institutional norms that influence the recruitment, retention, and well-being of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level

student affairs administrators. This study also has the potential to draw implications for student affairs preparation programs and professional development trainings for current and new professionals, particularly for white professionals. This study also illuminates the subtle, overt, and complicit role whites play in perpetuating, maintaining, and supporting institutional structures and policies that reinforce racism within student affairs work and higher education. However, it can also not be overstated the impact of providing an opportunity for professionals whose voices have been omitted from the literature to be heard, validated, and provided an opportunity to elevate their stories for others in student affairs.

This research adds to the literature an understanding of the entry, socialization, and mid-level experiences of minoritized student affairs administrators. The stories of these administrators who are living and leading from the middle of an organization adds a nuanced understanding to how these professionals saw their socialization in the field of student affairs and the personal backgrounds influence their contemporary work. The opportunity to delve deep into narrative accounts of mid-level professionals gives the reader a chance to discover common experiences and challenge traditional understandings of student affairs professionals and the influence racism and institutional whiteness have on professionals from minoritized backgrounds.

I Ain't Here to Fix Nobody!

As a mid-level former student affairs professional, I experienced the *sandwiching effect* of being in the middle of an organizational hierarchy. The pressure I felt navigating conversations with supervisees, students, and senior administrators was

exhausting, each having a different agenda and pulling my attention in varying directions. However, as a white man, I was able to navigate my experience with the privilege of not having to consider how my race and/or gender impacted my work compared to colleagues who did not look like me. I was further privileged to have worked with a Black woman who *let me in* enough to understand the realities she navigated with her white supervisors, white colleagues, and me, her white supervisee.

Once I began my doctoral journey, I had more time to reflect on my work as a practitioner and think more critically on the ways racism and whiteness showed up in my working relationship with former colleagues and within the larger context of student affairs work and higher education institutions. I began to challenge a dominant assumption that racism experienced from those with positional power, supervisors, impeded work experiences the most. Moreover, understanding the complexity of systemic racism from across organizational hierarchies, social pressures, and rewarded behaviors of whiteness challenged my assumptions and begged a more nuanced understanding. What does the influence of racism look like when examined from the middle of the organization? How have formative experiences and socialization in the field influenced approaches to student affairs work? Would whiteness show up differently within the context of organizational hierarchies or positional authority?

During the course of this research, I spent significant time toiling over ideas, reflecting on interviews, and the stories my participants were gracious enough to share with me. As I approach this work and reflect on my own experiences, I realize more fully that I was complicit in the systems I hope to interrogate within this research. In a

story one participant, Jesús, shared of him sitting in a staff meeting being asked by his supervisor if "tacos and burritos" were being served at a Hispanic Heritage Month event and feeling alone when not a single person challenged the supervisor; or, when Jackie shared the regularity of having her white supervisee being assumed the director of the office. It could have easily been me these participants were talking about and I see myself being implicated in their stories. In reflecting on these narratives further, I wrote the following in my reflexive journal:

> *If you care, you dig deeper.*
>
> *If you care, you feel the hurt.*
>
> *If you care, you find a way to do better.*
>
> *If you care, you know the work starts with you.*
>
> *I think the conventional or dominant role of the researcher has often been to hold up a mirror to communities other than their own, think anthropologists. This has produced a research discourse promoting a rhetoric of disadvantage and communities of individuals who are in need of "fixing" or "helped." I ain't here to fix nobody! But, how the hell do I approach these stories? What do I do with them? Just do something.*
>
> *Although my analysis phase began at the conclusion of my first interview, my more formal analysis phase was met with an inability to synthesize the information. I do believe that our (white people and those of western ideologies) have been so socialized to expect a written blueprint, to have the directions from*

start to finish written out and subsequently followed, a true instruction manual

that follows a research project.

For these same reasons, I have a troubled relationship with the word "expert" or

"expertise." Who gets to call themselves an expert? Who gets the right to bestow

that title? Does being an expert also mean not having to worry about being

challenged? The word expert, at times, give me anxiety. It breathes an air of

elitism and perfection. I am far from either and do not believe anyone is, nor can

be perfect or truly an expert.

My ongoing readings and reflections of my participants' stories were greeted

with a sense of empathy, compassion, and rage. This response, I concluded,

should not be viewed as a hindrance or incorrect approach coming as I view my

former work as a student affairs professional and current researcher through an

ethic of care. The beauty and the necessity of this work are not in a neatly

packaged document, dissertation, or list of directions for one to follow, they exist

in the messiness and muddled confusion of starting and continuing, of reflecting

and moving forward, and hoping these stories continue to sit with me and my

readers lending an ear to these participant's narratives.

This study grew out of these experiences and a desire to further understand a perspective

other than my own.

Rather than move to a quick jump of asking what it is "I" or "white people" can

do to address racism experienced by minoritized mid-level professionals, I seek to center

an understanding from the voices and experiences of those within this research. Simply

asking, what can be done would discursively function as a way to keep whiteness central and move to quickly to "do something" rather than listen and hear the stories of participants (Ahmed, 2007). Further, I must recognize the privileges I have embarking on this research journey. I acknowledge that simply engaging this research I will likely obtain additional benefits unearned whereas, other minoritized scholars may not gain or be scrutinized more heavily.

Usage of Language and Definition of Key Terms

Throughout this dissertation I use some technical language and higher education jargon that require a more precise definition. Additionally, my use of language when used to describe different identities (i.e. race, ethnic, gender, etc.) may appear *inconsistent* or *sloppy*. For example, when I refer to specific people in this dissertation I use the specific terms participants used to describe their own or other's race or ethnic identity (i.e. Black, African American, Latina/o/x, Hispanic). Some participants used terms interchangeably which is reflected in their direct quotes or discussion of specific people.

Additionally, when referring to existing literature that uses racial and ethnic terms however, I will utilize the terms used by the author(s) of that research. For example, one researcher may use the term Black or Latino, where another may use the term African American or Hispanic/Latinx, etc. Additionally, existing literature may also refer to racially or ethnically minoritized populations as "people of color," or similar; I acknowledge author's original use of language when referencing that literature. Instead of using terms "minority" or "people of color," I borrow the term "minoritized"

11

acknowledging the process [action] of minoritization, rather than an identity [noun] one holds and the social construction of race within society and may be used alongside the use of the word "marginalized." Care and intentional education is needed when using these socially constructed terms when referring to identities as confusion and debates ensue divorced from the definitions and redefinitions of identity (Obach, 1999; Omi & Winant, 2015). As one participant, Yvette, stated,

> But how are student affairs professionals being trained and educated on what it is to support students, staff of marginalized identities? What does marginalized identities even mean? Do people know what that means? We still have people using the term minority. I hate that term. Can we just nix the term already? I don't think people understand that when you are of a marginalized identity, your identity shows up every single day, and you can't do a damn thing about that.

In this study, the following terms and definitions are listed below to provide context on how they are operationalized:

Approach/Inhibition/Avoidance (AIA) Theory of Power – theoretical framework considering complex organizational dynamics among middle managers within an organization.

Counter-narratives – a means to recognize and legitimize the perspectives of traditionally marginalized groups of people providing an avenue for minoritized people to name their reality and express their story (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) – educational and legal movement that seeks to explore, name, and transform relationships among race, racism, and power. Also recognizes unnamed and ignored elements of history and contemporary structures that allow racism and white supremacy to persist (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Patton, 2016).

Mid-level student affairs administrator – non-instructional support personnel overseeing a program area and typically reporting to a senior-level administrator (e.g. Vice President for Student Affairs, Associate/Assistant Vice President, or Dean of Students) and supervises full-time professional staff (Young, 1990).

Microaggression – subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color or minoritized populations that communicate negative or denigrating messages (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2002).

Student Affairs – any advising, counseling, management, or administrative function at a college or university that exists outside the classroom (ACPA & NASPA, 1998).

Whiteness – an ideology within society or organizations that considers the dominant norms of social, political, economic, and cultural behaviors as neutral. Anything outside of those standards are viewed as deviant or unacceptable (Cabrera, 2014; Lipsitz, 2006). Whiteness is often invisible, unnamed, and can be embodied by whites and people of color (Leonardo, 2009).

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into six chapters. In Chapter I, I describe the crucial role of mid-level student affairs administrators. I also provide a statement of the research problem, the purpose of the study, and research questions this study seeks to

13

answer. I further provide my connection and desire to conduct this research and a definition of key terms used in this dissertation. In Chapter II, I provide a review of the relevant literature which offer further context to mid-level student affairs administrators and this research. In Chapter III, I provide a description of the methodology of this research. I include a discussion of my researcher positionality and include the details of data collection and data analysis methods. In Chapter IV, I present an overview of the demographic information of the research participants and a personal narrative for each participant. In Chapter V, I present a thematic illustration of the findings from an expanded account of participant narratives. Finally, in Chapter VI, I provide a discussion of the research findings as they relate to the research questions and include implications for practice and further research.

Conclusion

The continued under representation of student affairs professionals from minoritized backgrounds is inconsistent with the increasing racial diversity of college student populations. Mid-level student affairs professionals comprise the largest group of administrators in the field, yet little research is available describing how they navigate their professional and personal environments. Understanding the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs professionals is crucial to building supportive and inclusive practices in student affairs (Blimling & Whitt, 1998) and calls to "intentionally and strategically direct energies, time, and resources" to racial equity work in student affairs (Quaye et al., 2019).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Racism in the United States continues to persist and pervade virtually every institutional structure within the country. The history of higher education institutions offer a further reminder of how racism and whiteness persist as an embedded norm of society (Thelin, 2011; Wilder, 2013). A more recent review of higher education literature, reveals the ongoing persistence of racism and oppressive environments faced by minoritized students (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). However, focusing on the racialized experiences of students without understanding how racism and whiteness is experienced within administrative ranks only preserves inequities in education.

In this chapter, I provide a review of the literature setting the context for this study. I offer a historical context of student affairs work, the role of mid-level student affairs administrators, and literature discussing experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized student affairs professionals. However, I begin with a discussion of the critical and organizational frameworks that guided this study and their use in a critique of the existing literature.

Critical and Organizational Frameworks

According to Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014), a theoretical framework supports a research study by guiding its methods and interpretations. Moreover, my approach to this literature review is not only to highlight the existing student affairs and organizational literature, but to provide a critique framed through the critical frameworks

of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the Approach/Inhibition/Avoidance Theory of Power (AIA). These theories lay the framework for understanding how racial and ethnic identity and organizational position impact the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators working at predominantly white institutions.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged out of a critique of the United States' legal system during the 1970s known as critical legal studies (CLS). Critical legal studies analyzes the formation of law and the intersections of the development and maintenance of a class system in America. Thus, CLS sought to uncover the power dynamics and personal interests at play in the legal system (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995). After growing concerns race and racism were not being addressed appropriately in CLS, Derrick Bell and legal scholars Kimberlé Crenshaw, Richard Delgado, and Mari Matsuda began developing a theory that would explicitly account for race and racism in legal analysis (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The legal foundation of CRT recognizes systemic practices of racism in social, political, institutional, and educational structures (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Tenets of Critical Race Theory

CRT scholarship cuts across many academic disciplines, including education. Yet, as noted by Ladson-Billings (1998) and Delgado and Stefancic (2012), many scholars acknowledge CRT does not have a fixed definition, nor a canonical theory on which to draw (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). Instead, CRT scholarship is

16

approached from a framework of core principles, or tenets, deployed in different means across the literature (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ledesma & Calderón, 2015).

Delgado and Stefancic (2012) highlight four core tenets, but also acknowledge that not all critical race theorists "would subscribe to every tenet" (p. 7):

- Racism is ordinary in society and difficult to address because it is often not acknowledged in society and colorblind conceptions of equality and treatment often frame discourse shaping policy and treatment within the U.S.

- Material determinism, or "interest convergence," asserts racial progress occurs only when of benefit to white interests

- Race is a social construction and are products of social thought and relations overtime. Each race has their own history and acknowledges intersectionality and antiessentialism of identities

- Experiential knowledge of racially/ethnically minoritized people is central and legitimate to matters of race and racism. It asserts racially/ethnically minoritized people are better able to account for racism than whites.

Delgado and Stefancic contend race and racism are deeply embedded within the social and institutional structures within the U.S. which often renders their effects difficult to reveal. The endemic nature of racism permeates throughout society and is normed which further reinforces structural and systematic inequities, often for racially/ethnically minoritized persons (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

17

The tacit and interwoven nature that race and racism play within institutional structures often makes analysis hard to eliminate or address (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Whites are often less likely to believe that racism is a continuing issue in society. Therefore, research in higher education failing to contend with race or racism will do little to address where racial inequities exist within higher education institutions. More poignantly, Patton and colleagues (2007) call for researchers and student affairs professionals to recognize "the entrenchment of race in educational settings, including programs and services offered through student affairs divisions…and the different ways people experience racial realities" (p. 49). This is seen in the lack of student development theories explicitly contending and addressing effects of race and racism on student growth and development (Hernández, 2016; Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007) and organizational research that only looks at race as a categorical marker of difference and not explicitly the impact of racism (Brooks & Clunis, 2007; Kile & Jackson, 2009).

Interest convergence, recognizes whites as the primary beneficiaries of civil rights legislation and racial progress comes when those interests align with the dominant group (Bell, 1980). Whites will tolerate advancements for racially/ethnically minoritized people as long as minimal disruption to the comfort and privileges enjoyed by whites is maintained (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Harper and Hurtado (2007) point to this phenomenon in higher education when university leaders only address racial incidents on campuses until negative press coverage or campus protests occur and threaten the "good" image of an institution.

The social construction thesis of race asserts that each individual carries their own identities and experience race and racism in different ways. "No person has a single, easily stated, unitary identity" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p.10). It further acknowledges each race has been racialized at different points in history and this racialization continues to evolve over time. CRT also rejects the notion of essentialism, or the belief that all people in a single group may think or act the same way. Essentialist notions of race are often carried forward in research that relies on "traditional identity categories" that do not consider race or ethnicity within a given socialized context (Brooks & Clunis, 2007). Therefore, if race is accepted as socially constructed, qualitative research can assist with developing a deeper contextual understanding of the impacts of race and racism within organizations.

Finally, the voices of color thesis asserts emphasis of experiential knowledge from racially/ethnically minoritized people and can be used to disrupt a master narrative developed for marginalized groups. Solórzano (1998) states, "CRT recognizes that the experiential knowledge of women and men of color is legitimate, appropriate, and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education" (p.122). Experiential knowledge adds specific context to *seemingly* objectivist research and viewpoints. Premium placed on the perspectives and the standpoints of racially/ethnically minoritized individuals further recognizing the constructed meaning of truth and reality, replacing comforting majoritarian narratives of events with ones that are more consistent with minoritized experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Use of CRT in Education

CRT deployed in higher education research can be "a powerful explanatory tool for the sustained inequity that people of color experience" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 18) and supported by educational institutions (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Patton, Haynes, Harris, & Ivery, 2014). The use of CRT as a research framework in educational spaces must "connect research with an activist agenda" (Patton et al., 2014, p.145) meaning, CRT scholarship should work to "expose racism in education *and* propose radical solutions for addressing it" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p.22).

Unlike a multicultural approach to education policy and practice that aims toward equal treatment and exposure, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) suggest, racial justice can only be accomplished when race is directly and purposely considered. However, in much of the higher education literature discussing race, racism is often masked or hidden behind semantic substitutes such as "chilly" or "unwelcoming" (Harper, 2012). The lack of direct discussions of racism in student affairs and higher education literature helps to reinforce a master narrative that institutions are a bastion of liberal inclusiveness, which they are not. However, it further reaffirms whites a psychological comfort of not having to confront racist behaviors within student affairs work, or worse not believing it exists (DiAngelo, 2018).

As educational institutions have focused on diversifying their student, faculty, and staff populations, the role of race and racism continue to remain under-theorized and documented in the research literature, particularly in student affairs literature (Patton et al., 2007). Additionally, much research on racially minoritized populations in higher

education position white behavior as the norm and causes many racially minoritized groups to be viewed from a deficit lens compared to a privileged white group. CRT can be used to challenge these colorblind narratives and expose how oppression affects racially minoritized groups and does not require a reference or comparison group (Diggles, 2014; Harper, 2012).

Suggestions to combat systemic racism found in higher education include calls for developing better allies (Patton & Bondi, 2015) and engaging in deeper conversations about race (Sue & Constantine, 2007; White-Davis, Stein, & Karasz, 2016). However, these are not without their challenges. For example, Patton and Bondi (2015) discuss the need for white social justice allies to "find themselves in contentious relationship with those in power" (p.509), however often are not fully willing to dedicate time, resources, and energy to dismantling racism and white supremacy because they directly and indirectly benefit from the privileges of being white. Additionally, barriers to dialogues about race often are caused by a "lack of comfort" or "fear of offending others" (White-Davis et al., 2016).

Much like research that uses racial and ethnic categories (Brooks & Clunis, 2007), organizational research seldom develops a contextual understanding of mid-level administrators (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017). This appears to be a gap in the research.

Approach/Inhibition/Avoidance (AIA) Theory of Power

The Approach/Inhibition/Avoidance (AIA) Theory of Power proposed by Anicich and Hirsh (2017) explicitly contends with how power works and is experienced at the mid-level range of an organization. It is a move from understanding organizational

21

power in static comparisons, or absolute terms (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). AIA encompasses the following propositions: 1) middle power results in increased vertical code-switching across interactions; 2) the frequency and relationship between vertical code-switching results in increased conflict; 3) frequent role conflict results in work-related anxiety; 4) mid-level individuals adopt behaviors that help to reduce uncertainty in their role; and 5) mid-level individuals are more likely to reflect broader organizational norms as a means to reduce role-conflict and anxiety (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017).

Due to their position within the organizational hierarchy, mid-level student affairs administrators as both supervisors and supervisees regular must engage in interactions with individuals possessing different types of power and status within an institution (Ackerman, 2007). According to the AIA theory, individuals in middle power positions – relative to those in high and low power positions – engage in frequent "vertical code-switching" (alternating interactions with high and low power partners) that can result in heightened role conflict and anxiety. In addition to their organizational role, racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators also have to navigate the predominantly white spaces working at PWIs (Gusa, 2010), contend with racial microaggressions (Sue & Constantine, 2007), and discrimination (Rosser & Javinar, 2003). Rather than just vertical code-switching, racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level administrators may further need to engage in cross-cultural code-switching (Molinsky, 2007), or linguistic code-switching (Heller, 1988).

As such, one's positional role *and* subjective cross-cultural experiences as a mid-level administrator *and* as a racially/ethnically minoritized person is likely to produce a unique psychological toll that is not experienced by those positioned at an upper or lower end of the organizational hierarchy or engage in predominantly intracultural (i.e. white-on-white) exchanges (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017; Molinsky, 2007). For example, Duguid and Goncalo (2015) examined a relationship of mid-level managers and effects on creativity and focus. Mid-level status individuals were found to be less creative than their high and low status peers and tended to have a narrower focus on more specific tasks, especially when they felt they were being evaluated or felt threat of status loss. The study however, did not examine influences of race or racism on these decisions, but illustrates the organization implications faced by mid-level administrators.

Literature examining experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators however, often examines the population as a category of analysis or supervisory relationships with superiors (Brooks & Clunis, 2007; Constantine & Sue, 2007). Again, this appears to be a gap in the literature where explicit explorations of the impacts of race/racism *and* mid-level administrators.

Most research on social power and status within organizations is outside of higher education are often regulated to the laboratory setting of social psychologists. Experiences of repeated interactions across power dynamics have gone relatively unexplored. Due to assumed control over organizational resources, more attention in the literature has also been dedicated to individuals with higher power in an organization (e.g. presidents, CEOs, vice-presidents) (Schaerer, du Plessis, Yap, & Thau, 2018).

Moreover, theories of social power and status largely leave absent any discussion of the role or presence race or racism have in contributing to role conflict or work-related anxiety related to mid-level managers (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017; Duguid & Goncalo, 2015; Keltner at al., 2003).

Further, critiques of organizational frameworks also point out lack of attention to the human component in their analysis or are limited to cognitive factors (Squire, 2015). As such, organizations are often theorized absent of the context in which an individual experiences organizations as a social being. Second, organizational frameworks also limit and understanding of the social and external forces of an organization. AIA limits an analysis of mid-level managers to an independent understanding void of external forces such as race, racism, and social construction of identities. The addition of CRT to an analysis of organizational actors (i.e. racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators), broadens an understanding to include an examination of the economic, historical, and social factors racially minoritized experience (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This lack of attention to race in AIA and organizational frameworks is noted. However, an analysis of the vertical orientation of mid-level managers (AIA) through a lens of race and racism (CRT) is a strengthening component to this organizational framework.

Approach/Inhibition/Avoidance Theory of Power and Critical Race Theory

The following model (Figure 1) illustrates how AIA and CRT worked to provide a conceptual framework for studying how racially minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators made meaning of their experiences.

Critical Race Theory utilized to study societal and individual aspects

Approach/Inhibition/Avoidance Theory utilized to understand mid-level behavioral aspects

Societal Aspects: historical and contemporary, political, legal, and organizational structures

Behavioral Aspects: vertical code-switching, increased conflict, work-related anxiety, adopt behaviors to reduce uncertainty, reflect broader organizational norms

Individual Aspects: individual experiences & relationships

Figure 1 The Approach/Inhibition/Avoidance and CRT Framework

The diagram in the center of the larger figure represents the individual mid-level administrators and the behaviors aspects associated with their role. The vertical arrow represents the vertical code-switching occurring as a result of frequent interactions with senior administrators, supervisees, colleagues, and students in navigating their work responsibilities. The base of the triangles represents the organizational norms associated with individual institutions or the larger field of student affairs mid-level administrators may adopt to contend with the role conflict associated with frequent vertical-code switching and organizational translating. However, unlike AIA as a standalone framework, the greater diagram incorporates a broader understanding of historical,

25

contemporary, and larger structural systems having shaped the way individual

administrators and society understands and interacts around race. In other words, the

inner diagram focuses on the individual behavioral aspects and is expanded by CRT

through an understanding of how individual experiences and structural systems shape

how organizational experiences in relation to broader context of society.

Higher Education and Student Affairs

The future of American higher education and indeed, the country has become

more racially diverse. By the year 2043, it is predicted that whites will represent less

than half of the U.S. population (Yen, 2013). These changing demographics demand

American higher education institutions to not simply improve the representation of

historically underrepresented student populations but, to have institutional leadership

reflective of these changing student demographics. Yet, administrative leadership

positions are still largely held by white men (Patton, 2016; Pritchard & McChesney,

2018).

Historically, research has largely focused on the critical need to improve the

representation and experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized faculty, with limited

attention to improving administrative work (Kile & Jackson, 2009). Traditional views of

college and university administrators were often classified as "secondary" (Birnbaum,

1988). Contemporary views of administrative work, particularly the work of student

affairs administrators, acknowledges the increasingly complex role administrators have

in institutional leadership, student support, and holistic student learning outside of the

classroom (Kile & Jackson, 2009; Pritchard & McChesney, 2018; Rosser & Javinar,

2003). Student affairs administrators serve a particularly critical role in addressing the academic, developmental, and social needs of increasingly diverse campus environments (Gaston Gayles & Kelly, 2007).

During higher education's earliest days, "colonial colleges" were established and largely reserved for the education of religious ministers and leaders of the colonies (Rudolph, 1990). Following the Civil War, American higher education began to slowly expand. Several women's colleges were founded, and greater attention was focused on establishing educational programs in agriculture, mechanics, and military instruction funded by the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890 (Thelin, 2011). As college enrollments began to expand, the demands on the university faculty began to multiply and turn more attention towards growing knowledge in new areas of focus. In turn, this left the newer students largely neglected and, concerned college administrators began to capture some of the responsibilities faculty members had originally been responsible (American Council on Education, 1937). During the early twentieth century, the "Student Personnel Movement" began to emerge as enrollments began to grow and university administrators began to adopt more of an interest in individual student development employing social science research and coordinating efforts within each institution (American Council on Education, 1937). Following World War II, the GI Bill was used by many returning veterans and caused a further swell in institutional enrollments, the creation of a number of new institutions (Thelin, 2011), and placed additional demands of the student services provided by colleges and universities (Schuh et al., 2016).

In large part however, the increase in college enrollment was largely populated by white men and resulted in a representational decrease of women due to the large influx of veterans enrolling in higher education (Schuh et al., 2016). Further, the GI Bill did not prevent institutions from continuing to discriminate against Black veterans and racial minorities which continued to provide benefit to whites (Thelin, 2011). Additionally, most of the student supporting or developmental functions of colleges and universities were provided by faculty and the limited professional support staff employed by universities (Schuh et al., 2016).

During the time of these ballooning university enrollments, the contemporary profession of student affairs began to be laid out in some seminal documents, designed to better support the larger student population and diversity of students on campuses. One in particular was *The Student Personnel Point of View* which aligned the philosophical purposes of student affairs work with the greater purposes of higher education and the consideration of the development of the whole student (American Council on Education, 1937). Additionally, this document called for extensive research to support the emerging field of student personnel work which included understanding student development needs to aid in the holistic development of college students (American Council on Education, 1937). The student personnel movement was a major shift American colleges made in treating students as individuals and aided students' full development. This approach guided the student affairs profession for the next thirty years.

During the 1970s, key federal laws and judicial decisions informed a shift in the model of student affairs from student services to student development (Schwartz & Stewart, 2017). As a result, *Perspective on Student Affairs* became the new document to guide the practice of student affairs establishing a foundation for the development of students and the student affairs professional (NASPA, 2012). This model of student development continued through the 1990s when a shift from student development to the current state of understanding student affairs' role in student learning. Several documents emerged in the 1990s to shift this focus including, *The Student Learning Imperative* (ACPA, 1994); *Tomorrow's Higher Education: A Return to the Academy* (ACPA, 1996); and *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* (ACPA & NASPA, 1998). *The Student Learning Imperative* initially embraced the challenges in higher education as an opportunity for student affairs to commit to student learning and development (ACPA, 1994) however, the *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* was the document that laid out the practices to move the field in that direction (ACPA & NASPA, 1998). Those practices state that student affairs 1) engages students in active learning; 2) helps students develop coherent values and ethical standards; 3) sets and communicates high expectations for learning; 4) uses systematic inquiry to improve student and institutional performance; 5) uses resources effectively to achieve institutional missions and goals; 6) forges educational partnerships that advance student learning; and 7) builds supportive and inclusive communities. Principle seven expanded, states:

> Student learning occurs best in communities that value diversity, promote social responsibility, encourage discussion and debate, recognize accomplishments, and

foster a sense of belonging among their members. Good student affairs practice cultivates supportive environments by encouraging connections between students, faculty, and student affairs practitioners (ACPA & NASPA, 1998, p. 4). These founding and contemporary documents sets the stage for the importance of treating the field of student affairs with as much reverence as does literature centering the role of faculty in the student learning process. More importantly, the *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* professes practices and environments that run counter to the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized students, faculty, and administrators. As colleges become increasingly more diverse, it is crucial for institutional leaders to move from *valuing* diversity to structurally supporting diversity and inclusion as well.

More recently, the second largest student affairs professional association, ACPA-College Student Educators International, unveiled a vision document – *A Bold Vision Forward: A Framework for the Strategic Imperative on Racial Justice and Decolonization* (Quaye et al., 2019). This work shifts conversations from celebrating diversity and the importance of multiculturalism toward a commitment to anti-racism and decolonization work *at the center* of student affairs work, not ancillary or additive. The shift from former seminal documents moves the conversation of racism and discrimination from an individual analysis to an interrogation of core structures of higher education. This strategic focus challenges researchers and practitioners to examine their work from a systemic level and opens greater possibilities to reimagine higher education and challenge existing practices in student affairs and better understand the role racism play within higher education.

The Student Affairs Profession

The student affairs profession has been given the nickname of the "invisible profession" due to many professionals who stumble upon the profession or enter it by accident (Hunter, 1992; Young, 1990). Since many colleges and universities do not offer undergraduate degree programs for a career in student affairs, the majority of student affairs professionals are frequently introduced to the profession by those already in the field or had a "stumbled upon" student affairs as a career option, and not a result of career planning (Hunter, 1992).

As the role of student affairs has evolved and encompassed more functional areas, expansion of professional staff members have also occurred, particularly at the mid-level range (Belch & Strange, 1995). Much of the student affairs literature however, is replete with an understanding of senior student affairs officers (SSAO) and entry-level professionals (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008). Mid-level administrators are often left out of the conversation and leaves much room to understand their crucial role in student affairs however, part of the limited understanding of the mid-level administrator is the ambiguity in defining the position.

The Mid-Level Student Affairs Administrator

Research on mid-level administrators in student affairs is an area of higher education that has gone relatively under explored (Rosser, 2000; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Young, 1990). Part of that is due to their ambiguous roles and relationships within an institution, the mid-level student affairs administrator is not well-defined throughout the field of student affairs as well as in the literature. Rosser and Javinar (2003), for

example, define the mid-level student affairs administrator as non-instructional support personnel usually reporting to a senior-level administrator (e.g. senior student affairs officer (SSAO), vice president for student affairs, associate/assistant vice president, or provost). Their positions are often differentiated by varying functional areas, skills, or specialized training. While not true for all mid-level professionals, they can also have supervising responsibilities of other professional staff (Young, 1990). Further complicating the consistency of defining the mid-level student affairs administrator is a lack of common job titles from one institution to another. For example, one institution may have a mid-level administrator with the title of "assistant director" yet, at another institution the same title may be used for an entry-level position. At yet another institution, an individual may possess the title of "director" and report to the SSAO but have no professional staff to manage. While some on the campus may perceive this "director" as a mid-level administrator, it does not fit the definition by Young (1990) who adds that mid-level administrators also supervise professional staff.

Power and influence are additional variables to consider when researching the position of the mid-level administrator. While the mid-level student affairs professional is charged with a large amount of responsibility to implement programs and services on a campus, they often lack the training (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008), formal leadership power, or institutional influence to make necessary changes that can improve their area of responsibility (Belch & Strange, 1995; Rosser & Javinar, 2003). Mid-level administrators remaining in a similar position over longer periods of time at one institution can gain additional responsibilities or improve their institutional knowledge

that may not be true for a newer administrator who began in their role. This can drastically alter and compound an approach to professional development or career planning for mid-level professionals of all backgrounds and abilities (Jackson & Flowers, 2003; Sagana & Johnsrud, 1991).

Historically, management positions in higher-education administration have been held by white men, creating an environment more conducive to their own comfort (Crum & Naff, 1997) and a white institutional presence (Gusa, 2010). Racially/ethnically minoritized people in administrative positions were then implicitly assigned to this institutional culture and made to adapt and conform to the dominant culture of white men. Tyrell (2014) contends that over time, mid-level student affairs administrators construct the "managerial self" as a combination of personal identities, professional responsibilities, institutional and professional knowledge, and the personal philosophies one possesses towards their work (Tyrell, 2014). For example, Ely (1994) found women in organizations dominated by men to adopt or emphasize behaviors typically displayed by men so not to be perceived as members of a marginal or minoritized group. Similarly, Ogbu (2004) observed Black people in predominantly white spaces, often took on characteristics, behaved, and talked the way white people did and required the mastery of "White knowledge, behaviors and speech, such as for formal education, upward social mobility and participation in societal institutions controlled by White people" (p. 14).

Racially/Ethnically Minoritized Student Affairs Administrators

Statistical information for student affairs administrators is difficult to calculate because it is not readily available or structured in a similar manner that student and

faculty data is often presented (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). However, research does support the notion that racially/ethnically minoritized people are underrepresented in administrative positions in higher education (Flowers, 2003; Jackson, 2003; Sagana & Johnsrud, 1991). For example, Jackson and O'Callaghan (2009) reported that for student affairs administrators of color, they often possess more education than their white counterparts and are more likely to be female. Similarly, data compiled by the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) call attention to the representation of student affairs professionals compared to the demographic makeup of the student population. For example, across institutions surveyed Latinx students make up 17% of students yet, only 8% of student affairs professionals, Asian students represent 6% of the population compared to 3% of professionals. While white men are underrepresented on average across all positions, CUPA-HR data supports Wesaw and Sponsler by presenting data showcasing white men are overrepresented in senior leadership positions (Pritchard & McChesney, 2018).

Research on the experiences of racially minoritized populations in higher education often focuses on students (Harper & Hurtado, 2007) and faculty (Cabrera, Franklin, & Watson, 2016; Stanley, 2006). Published literature specifically focusing on the racialized experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized administrators at predominantly white institutions is scarce. Few studies focusing on the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized student affairs administrators, particularly at the mid-level range exist (e.g. Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Hamilton, 2009; Silva, 2003; Turner & Grauerholz, 2017).

34

Experiences of Racially/Ethnically Minoritized Administrators

Racially/ethnically minoritized student affairs administrators often report experiences with racism (Henry, 2010; Rosser & Javinar, 2003), a lack of mentorship opportunities (Henry, 2010), and feeling overburdened with extra job responsibilities that go unrewarded (Hamilton, 2009; Jackson, 2003).

Rosser and Javinar (2003) examined quality of work life factors of over 1,100 mid-level student affairs leaders and found lower levels of work morale among those who perceived discrimination in their work. Although they did not find a direct relationship to discrimination and intent to leave a job, lower levels of morale can be associated with lower affinity to an institution, its students, and affect quality of work. In her study of African American women in student affairs, Henry (2010) pointed to discrimination having to prove oneself were challenges often faced. She did highlight that support from supervisors and staff as a positive factor however, limited support in the form of mentorship, particularly from other African American women, was an issue due to their overall lack of representation in administrative positions.

Clayborne and Hamrick (2007), who explored the leadership experiences of six African American women in midlevel student affairs roles. In their interviews, the women reported the need to work harder than their white counterparts. These women also reported regularly investing their time and energy with students and staff they supervised yet, did not feel that the same investment was made from their white supervisors. Similar experiences are also reported by racially/ethnically minoritized

faculty, particularly women, who invest extra time to mentor racially/ethnically minoritized students (Baez, 2000).

White-Davis and colleagues (2016) addressed how cross-cultural dialogues about race occurred among supervisors of color and white supervisees and vice versa. They found that supervisors of color were most likely to engage in dialogue about race, but often resisted due to "Not wanting to be seen as overemphasizing race" (p. 352) and reported white supervisees seemed to not benefit from these conversations as much as supervisees of color. Similarly, among cross-racial supervisory dyads in a counseling training program, Constantine and Sue (2007) found that Black supervisees indicated their white supervisors would often minimize or avoid discussions of racial issues. The study also highlighted seven themes of microaggressions experienced by Black supervisees. They include: invalidating racial-cultural issues, stereotypic assumptions of Black clients, stereotypic assumptions of Black supervisees, white supervisor fear of being viewed as racist, focusing on clinical weaknesses, blaming clients of color for problems stemming from oppression, and offering culturally insensitive treatment. Their study concluded by stating, "Racial microaggressions take a psychological toll on Black trainees, and their efforts cannot be considered minimally harmful" (p. 149) and acknowledged the experiences caused considerable time and energy to be dedicated to coping with these situations.

Summary of Review of Literature

Middle managers have largely been a neglected population in student affairs and the broader organizational literature (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017; McClellan, 2012; Mills,

2009). There appears to be a noticeable gap in the literature of scholarship that contends with racially/ethnically minoritized student affairs administrators framed through a critical race lens and that explicitly focuses on racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level administrators. While scholarship does illuminate experiencing racism in the form of microaggressions and discrimination leads to lower levels of morale and quality of work, few explorations directly address the impact these experiences have on student and colleague interactions (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Rosser & Javinar, 2003).

Despite the diversification of higher education institutions, student affairs administrative leadership remains largely white and conversations about diversity and race remain fundamentally separate from a student affairs leadership. This divide only serves to normalize whiteness in student affairs practices and delays the realization of creating more inclusive environments for students, faculty, and staff of all backgrounds. If student affairs leaders want to realize the goals laid out in the *Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs* (ACPA & NASPA, 1998), then researchers and institutional leaders need to get serious about recognizing the connections between race, administrative work, and developing supportive campus communities. Understanding how racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators navigate and experience their positions at predominantly white institutions adds an important aspect to better understand their experiences, as well as contribute to a more inclusive and socially just community in higher education.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a description of the methodology and research design that guided this study. Specifically, methods for data collection and data analysis procedures are described, followed by issues of quality and rigor related to trustworthiness, validity, the researcher's role and reflexivity, and limitations of the study. I begin, however, with a restatement of the problem under study identified in Chapter One.

Restatement of the Problem

A growing body of research exists exploring the racialized experiences of student affairs administrators; however, much of this literature examines the experiences of graduate students (Harris & Linder, 2018), entry-level/new professionals (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008), or senior administrators (Jackson & Flowers, 2003). Experiences of mid-level administrators in student affairs is an area of higher education that has gone relatively underexplored (Rosser, 2004; Rosser & Javinar, 2003; Young, 1990), particularly racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators working at predominantly white institutions (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007). This lack of understanding about the individual experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized administrators prevents student affairs and institutional leaders from developing a deeper understanding of how to recruit, support, and retain these administrators and, in turn, how to support the growing diversity of student populations in higher education. To that end, this study was guided by three overarching research questions:

1. What are the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators working at predominantly white institutions?

2. How do these experiences impact the work and interactions of these administrators with colleagues and students?

3. What ways are racist structures reinforced or disrupted in student affairs work?

In the next section, I discuss the paradigmatic influences and epistemological assumptions on this study before turning to the research design.

Paradigmatic Perspective

Much debate exists as to the importance of stating a researcher paradigm. Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014) argue that prior to entering any research study, it is crucial to understand the paradigmatic lens from which a study is informed; doing so helps guide the reader, their interpretations, and eventual application of a study's findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mertens, 2014). While some fluidity between paradigms is acknowledged (Mertens, 2014), this study is positioned from a transformative-constructivist paradigm.

A transformative-constructivist paradigm centers the lives of traditionally minoritized populations and partners *with* those under study by constructing a shared understanding of *their* world (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mertens, 2014). For example, Mertens (2014) discusses that the "agency for change rests in the persons in the community working side-by-side with the researcher toward the goal of social transformation" (p. 9). Mertens does not take the position that the researcher alone can do this, but that the researcher must work in a dialectical fashion (Freire, 2008) with the

research participants to frame a collective understanding and path forward. The constructivist paradigm acknowledges individuals hold multiple realities that are context-bound and is not presumed to hold a single meaning or representation of the world. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Rather, researchers holding a transformative-constructivist paradigm aim to develop a rich and nuanced understanding of individual lives by co-constructing meaning and working toward the elimination of oppressive structures (Jones et al., 2014; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018; Mertens, 2014).

Research Design

Interview-based qualitative research designs provide important strengths to research focused on individual experience (Pope, Mueller, & Reynolds, 2009). To best facilitate experience sharing and storytelling, narrative inquiry was selected for this study (Riessman, 2008). Narrative inquiry explores how research participants interact with the large social arena of which they are a part, including environment, interactions with others, political, and organizational pressures present (Jones et al., 2014). Studies utilizing narrative inquiry can also have powerful mobilizing effects for social movements, encouraging people to act and encourage social change (Riessman, 2008). As Bochner and Riggs (2014) discussed, some goals of narrative inquiry are,

> to activate subjectivity, feeling, and in readers or listeners; to raise consciousness; to promote empathy and social justice; and to encourage activism–in short, to show what it can mean to live a good life and create a just society (p. 201).

Narrative inquiry is also collaborative in nature where researchers do not enter the participant's worlds as experts, but as learners. Power of knowledge creation is shared and privileges the experiential knowledge of participants lived experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As such, the power of narrative inquiry lies in its ability to encounter the relative and contextual perspectives of participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), which adds to a nuanced understanding participants' experiences. As a result, it is important to develop a rich understanding of background information, demographic data, and formative experiences that impacted contemporary interpretations of experiences.

For this study, mid-level administrators in student affairs who identified as racially or ethnically minoritized were asked to share their stories in open-ended, semi-structured interviews designed to illustrate participant's unique experiences and best answer the research questions guiding this study. The theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and AIA Approach/Inhibition/Avoidance Theory of Power (AIA) informed the interview protocol and subsequent analysis of information shared during interviews. Specifically, CRT informed the assumptions that race may impact the experiences of individuals who serve as mid-level administrators in predominantly/historically white institutions, institutions that were not originally created to serve participants of this study. AIA informed questions and analysis that explicitly explored the experiences of individuals holding a mid-level position within student affairs and the unique role(s) participants take on to execute their job responsibilities. While these frameworks informed the initial structure of the interview protocols,

interviews were as open ended as possible which allowed participants to share anything they deemed relevant to understanding their own experiences.

Research Methods

In this section, I provide a description of the methods used for participant selection, data collection, data analysis, and efforts to ensure quality and rigor of this study.

Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling was used for the selection of participants in this study. Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014) describe purposeful sampling as, "sampling for information-rich cases that hold the greatest potential for generating insight about the phenomenon of interest" (p. 107). Unlike quantitative research which aims to generalize its implications to a greater population, qualitative research focuses more on developing a richer account of the phenomena under study until a point of saturation or redundancy is reached (Jones et al., 2014).

Participant Criteria

Because the purpose of this study was focused on understanding the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators working at predominantly white institutions of higher education, I required the participants to have the following characteristics: 1)Participants self-identified as being a member of a racially or ethnically minoritized group (e.g. Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or Multiracial). 2) Participants had to currently hold a mid-level administrative role in student affairs. Given the ambiguity of defining mid-level administrators in the

student affairs literature (Young, 1990), I further defined mid-level student affairs administrators as: non-instructional support personnel reporting to a senior-level administrator (e.g. Vice President for Student Affairs, Associate/Assistant Vice President, or Dean of Students) *and* supervising full-time professional staff. 3) I also focused on mid-level administrators who have been in their current roles for at least a year to draw from greater experiences related to their role as a mid-level administrator, rather than an entry-level or the experiences of their transition into a mid-level role. 4) Participants also had to work at a four-year predominantly white institution, defined as an institution where white students hold the largest numerical majority of any racial identity on campus. For example, this would allow for participants to be employed at a recognized Hispanic-Serving Institution so long as white students continued to hold the largest numerical majority of any racial identity on that particular campus.

Geographic location of the institution was not a criteria applied to this study, nor was institutional type (e.g. private, public, sectarian, secular, etc.). Attempts were also made to recruit a variety of racial and other social identities (e.g. gender, sexual orientation, social-class, etc.), not to serve as a representative for others holding similar identities, but to enhance this study and illuminate nuanced differences of participants across and within social identities (Jones et al., 2014).

Participant Recruitment

Solicitation of participants primarily occurred though my personal and professional networks which were developed over my 12 years of working in student affairs and higher education. These networks were accessible through personal contact

43

information I already had in my possession and professional affinity networks I had access to online and through social media. Prior to any recruitment or solicitation of participants, approval was received from Texas A&M University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix A). Following approval, I sent a solicitation email to mid-level professionals who I believed met the study criteria and invited them to participate or forward to other professionals within their networks who they felt met the study criteria and would be interested (see Appendix B). I also posted a recruitment flyer in online Facebook groups relating to student affairs professionals (see Appendix C).

Initial recruitment efforts generated ten interested potential participants, of which nine met the selection criteria and five agreed to participate in the study. Interested participants were sent a copy of the Informed Consent Document which described the demographic criteria for participation, interview protocol, and notification of interviews being recorded and transcribed (see Appendix D). Included alongside the Informed Consent Document was an Open Letter to My Potential Participants explaining my social identities, personal and professional background, and my motivations for conducting the study (see Appendix E). Participants were also provided the opportunity to ask any questions prior to agreeing to participate. Once participants agreed to participate and before any interviews took place, they were asked to return a signed copy of the Informed Consent Document via email or were asked to sign in-person prior to beginning the initial interview. An additional call for participants relying on snowball sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of existing participants and extended professional networks generated an additional two interested and eligible participants.

44

Data Collection

Data collection in narrative inquiry can take several different forms and vary greatly from study to study and participant to participant; however, the inquiry should focus on the ability to elicit the richest description of the phenomena under study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Jones et al., 2014). Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used to collect data for this study. Semi-structured interviews also allow for participants to become involved in the shaping of the interviews compared to a more rigid structured format (Jones et al., 2014). A series of three semi-structured interviews occurred over a period from July to December 2019 with the seven participants, for a total of 21 separate interviews. Four of the 21 interviews were conducted in-person, and the remaining interviews were conducted via Zoom videoconferencing. Each interview lasted between 40 -104 minutes, with the average interview lasting approximately 70 minutes. All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Participant compensation was not initially included in the IRB application and participants were under no perception their time was being compensated. During the interview process an addendum was submitted to IRB asking for approval to offer compensation to each participant after the final interview (see Appendix F). Following the conclusion of the third interview, participants were sent a Charitable Donation and Thank You Email thanking them for their participation and offering to compensate each participant for their time during the study by making a $35 donation to any charitable organization participants would like (see Appendix G).

Interview Format

The first interview was comprised of a demographic questionnaire about the participants' personal and professional backgrounds that was returned prior the beginning of the second interview (see Appendix H). The interview protocol of the first interview included questions to develop rapport and understand participants' student affairs journey and history. The second interview focused on understanding their current work experience. The third interview focused on participants' reflections of the interview experience and served as a member check of the first two interviews.

Each interview, whether in-person or via Zoom videoconferencing, began with casual conversation and rapport building before beginning the interview protocol. The interview guide included questions that were open-ended, allowing for participants to share their experiences openly with the ability to elaborate as they saw fit (see Appendix I). Additional probing or clarifying questions were used to elicit richer responses or context from each participant.

Confidentiality

Approval for conducting this study was first obtained from the Texas A&M University Institutional Review Board (IRB). A written informed consent document was provided to all participants explaining the interview process, including the audio-recording and transcription of interviews. Prior to beginning the first interview, participants were asked to self-select a personal pseudonym used to identify them in transcripts and study-related material. Institutional and personal identities of individuals mentioned during all interviews was further redacted or substituted with assigned

pseudonyms in transcripts and study findings. Participants were provided a verbatim

copy of the interview transcripts to further redact or eliminate any information

participants did not feel comfortable sharing. Audio recordings and interview transcripts

were stored on a password-protected computer or in a locked campus office. All digital

audio files, demographic questionnaires, and study-related material with identifying

information will be destroyed once they are no longer needed for analysis. Per Texas

A&M University IRB requirements, signed and dated consent documents will be

maintained in the possession of the researcher for at least three years.

Data Analysis

Data analysis consisted of ongoing interpretation of the interview data,

handwritten notes, and personal reflections following interviews and throughout the data

collection process. As Bochner and Riggs (2014) describe, data analysis in narrative

inquiry is not guided by a prescriptive approach and can take many forms. Instead, it

requires the researcher to engage in decisions about how they will interpret the data and

the development of an understanding through the individual lived experiences of each

participant (Jones et al., 2014).

Initially, I struggled with how to present the data and experimented with multiple

ways of discussing the findings of this study, including analyzing data horizontally

across participants and thematizing narratives. Polkinghorne (1995) differentiated

between two distinct forms of narrative inquiry; *analysis of narratives*, treating

narratives as data and development of themes and, *narrative analysis*, which takes the

form of a story describing the experiences and issues of the participants. Norman Denzin

also resisted the urge of turning narratives into structural categories by stating it leads to readers not hearing "the story as it was told" (Denzin, 1997, p. 249). Thematic reduction was not my intended aim in this study and Polkinghorne's approach also provided me with the opportunity to go beyond the search for the one 'grand narrative' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and to examine participants' narratives from a process of storytelling, describing the participants' narratives and then the themes that wove through them. My initial analysis focused on building a full picture of the individual participant's lives that capture the "richness and the nuances of meaning" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 11). Doing so helps the reader understand the "why" and "how" things happened, as well as understand the "why" and "how" participants responded the way they did. This approach to *narrative analysis* (Polkinghorne, 1995) has "to appeal to readers in a way that helps them empathize with the protagonist's [racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level administrators] lived experience" (Kim, 2016, p.197). It also acknowledges the social construction thesis of CRT by not developing essentializing themes. As Ladson-Billings (2013) asserts, "Rather than attempting to simplify and strip down to a single explanation, CRT scholarship is willing to engage in the 'messiness' of real life" (p. 40). For example, I did not search for a unifying explanation to all of the participant's experiences. Narratives captured some range of variation within similar identities and highlighted similar experiences between identities.

Following each interview, I listened to the audio-recordings in their entirety. I then transcribed each interview and reviewed the transcript and my interview notes, making comments and, highlighting key phrases or turning points in participants' lives

and the ways race and racism show up within participants' interactions. Following the third interview with each participant, I began to summarize each participant's narratives in their own words, focusing on formative experiences participants alluded to having impacted their current work experience, and removing all but crucial elements of their narratives that helped to answer the research questions for this study. The theoretical frameworks described in Chapter II helped inform elements of participants' narratives that emerged to address the research questions. I highlighted similarities and differences that stood out from the research on middle managers and racially minoritized professional in organizations and student affairs. From my initial review of the literature, I expected to find narrative accounts including the following: experience of microaggressions (Sue & Constantine, 2007); a lack of professional mentorship or representation (Henry, 2010); feeling obligated to perform more than their peers (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009); coping strategies for navigating relationships (Constantine & Sue, 2007); and social isolation (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Rosser & Javinar, 2003). I further coded data that illuminated how participants' professional and personal lives were impacted by race, ethnicity, gender, vertical-orientation, and social relationships with institutional and environmental elements. During this second phase, continued iterative readings allowed me to enter "into conversation with the larger theoretical literature so that the researcher can remain sensitive to nuances of meanings expressed and the different contexts into which the meanings may enter" (Josselson, 2011, p. 228) and connect back to the larger social contexts of the participant's lives (Jones et al., 2014).

Quality and Rigor

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed several strategies for enhancing a qualitative study's quality and rigor or, "trustworthiness," and propose four criteria for judging the soundness of qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility is the establishment that results from a study that is believable to the participant(s) of a study. Transferability is the ability of a study to provide results that can be transferred to other contexts or settings. Dependability refers to the ability of a study to obtain similar results if a study were to be repeated, or observations were to occur again. Finally, confirmability of a study refers to the capacity to which study results can be confirmed by others and is grounded in the data and not simply developed from a researcher's assumptions or biases.

In narrative inquiry, Riessman (1993) further differentiates *truth* from *trustworthiness* as a key semantic difference between the development of an objective reality versus the understanding of a socially constructed social world. Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that qualitative researchers should build trustworthiness by engaging in multiple forms of verification procedures. In this study, I utilized serval methods to increase the quality and rigor of the findings including the use of member checks, peer debriefers, an audit trail, and reflective journaling, all of which are explained in further detail.

Member Checks

The trustworthiness of the findings were enhanced by transcribing all interviews from the audio-recordings verbatim, listening to the recordings, and cross-verifying the

transcript multiple times to ensure accuracy. Member checking, or respondent

verification, was conducted to confirm what was transcribed was accurate and

represented each participant's experience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Full transcripts were

sent to each participant via email following the second interviews of each participant for

their review with a request to reply with any edits or comments for further accuracy and

clarification (see Appendix J). The third interview also served as an additional

opportunity to ensure the accuracy of the first two interviews and discuss initial findings

from the previous conversations as well as across other participants.

Riessman (1993) refers to member checks as 'correspondence' and notes that

even if a researcher's interpretations are recognizable to participants, individual stories

are not static and shifts in meaning continue to evolve as further consciousness develops.

This was certainly true in this study, as continued conversations with participants from

one interview to the next elicited new memories and interpretations of past events and

brought further awareness to participants' interactions with colleagues at their

institution. For example, one participant commented how he became more aware of his

interactions with other directors and staff members following our first and second

interviews.

Peer Debriefers

Following my development of each participant's narrative, I initially utilized peer

debriefers to review the narratives and asked for feedback on the written summary. Peer

debriefers were trusted advisors and colleagues with some familiarity of my research

topic who provided me an opportunity to further develop my thoughts and check my

assumptions regarding my interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer debriefers shared similar identities as research participants providing fruitful advice about formative experiences participants had that may have impacted their professional careers and personal lives. Their advice aided my development of initial participant summaries, follow-up interview questions, and my interpretations of the study's findings.

Audit Trail

All interview transcripts, written field notes, initial reflections, and participant summaries were maintained and cataloged for audit purposes and the development of participant narratives and interpretations of this study's findings. This also included written notes outlining decisions I made during the research process and aided in my development of thick description of the research setting and participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For example, there were a few initial interview notes where I noticed some of my mindless doodles in the margins during certain parts of the interviews. After reviewing the audio recordings and transcripts, I noticed these doodles were occurring during parts of the interviews I may have initially dismissed or thought irrelevant. This observation forced me to become more mindful of my interviewer presence and reviewed transcripts closer for formative experiences participants shared and may have influenced current perceptions.

Reflexive Journaling

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I maintained a reflexive journal of my observations and initial thoughts. Reflexivity enhances all aspects of the qualitative research process by keeping information about my identity, personal and

professional experiences, and research observations available for readers to evaluate the soundness of my work (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This debriefing activity took many forms, I utilized both written and audio recorded methods of documenting my thoughts which further aided in forefronting my research subjectivity allowing me to interrogate my own assumptions and draw connections between participant narratives and the existing research literature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln et al., 2018).

Role of the Researcher

A hallmark of qualitative research positions the researcher as the primary data collection instrument (Jones et al., 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While it is reasonable to expect that in any research, individual values, beliefs, experiences, and interpretations inform a study design and eventual findings, transparency of researcher positionality is exceptionally critical within a highly relational study of narrative inquiry where knowledge is co-constructed alongside research participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Therefore, qualitative researchers must be able to develop an understanding of how their particular values, beliefs, and life experiences have informed their overall researcher positionality, and how they will inform the entire research process.

Researchers bring a host of biases to any study, seen, unseen, and unforeseen (Milner, 2007). Milner describes this process by focusing his comments on the importance of researchers not only *considering* but *interrogating* "their research positionality in order to bring to researchers' awareness and consciousness known (seen), unknown (unseen), and unanticipated (unforeseen) issues, perspectives, epistemologies, and positions" (p. 395). Therefore, researchers must not completely

53

separate their lives from research, but should transparently position themselves within their work in order to provide additional insights and checks into the study's construction and interpretations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

My Identities and Influence on This Study

When discussing the role of the researcher or, researcher positionality, there is some debate of explicitly mentioning or simply listing the salient identities of a researcher (Patel, 2015; Quaye et al., 2019). Although it feels natural to simply begin with a listing of all my salient identities, it can seem trivial because it does little to interrogate for the reader how these identities inform or show up within a study. For example, does knowing I am a white, cisgender man, raised in a suburban middle-class neighborhood lend less credibility to a study attempting to center lives of racially minoritized professionals? Does my first-generation college student status or sexually minoritized identity lend additional validity to this study over others who do not? Beyond a listing of identities, Patel (2015) challenges researchers to share how researchers approach their work by discussing the researcher's motivations and influences on a particular study rather than solely resting on identity markers of categorization and conceptions of epistemologies within specific populations. However, it is also important to explore the inherent limitations of my own positionality and how participants may receive and understand me as a researcher (Milner, 2007).

My interest in this study stems from my years as a student affairs administrator advising, supporting, and advocating for social justice issues in the roles and campuses I have served. I come to this study heavily influenced by my own professional student

affairs experiences as a mid-level administrator supervised by a Black woman and who has supervised students and other racially/ethnically minoritized professionals over my professional career. My experiences working in student affairs with diverse student, faculty, and staff populations deepened my understanding and advocacy for minoritized populations, across identities and ultimately led to my interest in conducting qualitative research to learn more about the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized student affairs administrators. Particularly, I am reminded of the students I have recruited to the field over the years, many with minoritized identities and feeling a deep sense of responsibility and commitment to ensuring the future of student affairs is as inclusive and just as possible.

Through conversations with racially/ethnically minoritized students, faculty, and staff at PWIs, I heard stories in which individuals shared experiences with racism, prejudice, and frustration navigating institutions that did not reflect their identities or validated their existence. My identity and previous student affairs experiences have informed the formation of this study, but also shaped how I engaged with study participants and interpretations. Particularly, as a white researcher, I bring my own worldview, assumptions, and experiences influencing topic selection and choice of methodology, to how participants experienced the interview process and my presence as an interviewer. For example, Leonardo (2004) identifies the risk and ease of turning an analysis onto my own experiences by recentering my white identity and whiteness through the participant's stories.

As a white man, I realize I can navigate the world and much of society from a place of privilege. That privilege also has informed a degree of ignorance on the intersections of oppression and experiences individuals with minoritized identities and extends to the possibility of being further privileged of being seen as the "woke white guy" or a white person who "gets it." Thompson (2003), for example, cautions white researchers that may focus or seek attention on receiving the validation of racially/ethnically minoritized participants to be viewed as a "good white person." Similarly, Patton and Bondi (2015) warn white people who desire validation from racially/ethnically minoritized folks for being "nice" or playing an ally at the individual level without addressing larger systemic issues or seeking to engage a larger audience (e.g. whites) about racism and discrimination. Even with these concerns heeded, researchers must further be aware of issues when attempting to write about individuals who have been marginalized. Fine (1994), for example, cautioned about the inherent risk of romanticizing narratives of those from marginalized backgrounds by focusing on feel good stories or ignoring issues of racism or discrimination and not illuminating behaviors and actions of oppressors. Further still, I find it important not to make a spectacle of suffering incurred by their experiences, but to highlight the agency participants have in sharing their story and navigating their lives.

Qualitative researchers also must be aware of the inherent power an interviewer holds and the impression of conducting research that may appear to *help* participants rather than develop an understanding of their experiences. Fine further cautions and describes the dilemma she faced in her own research (Fine, 1994). She described the

ethical dilemma she faced because "the power of my translation comes far more from my whiteness, middle-classness, and education than from the stories I tell. But my translation also colludes in structures of domination. I know that when… African American, Latino, Asian, or Native American scholars do the same kinds of work as I, they are more likely to be heard as biased" (p. 150). To that end, I recognize the complicated space I occupy as someone with privileged identities that are more easily heard in spaces where minoritized identities and stories are ignored or silenced while also navigating to unforeseen dangers of misinterpreting participants' stories through my own experience or internalized stereotypes racist beliefs (Milner, 2007).

Bergerson (2003), however, alerts white scholars centering race and critical theories of race in their research not to appropriate the work that has already emerged from racially/ethnically minoritized communities. Instead, white researchers "must join the ranks of those celebrating the experiences of people of color and insist that the academy recognize these experiences as legitimate sources of knowledge" (Bergerson, 2003, p. 60). I agree with Bergerson's assertion that white people are not required to "legitimize" critical race scholarship. I do, however, believe white researchers can play an active and vocal role in transformative studies of race and power to become co-conspirators in the disruption of racism and systems of oppression within institutions of higher education and the political project of racial stratification (Omi & Winant, 2015).

In conducting this research, it was also critical for me to be mindful of how my own identities, particularly my dominant identities (i.e. race and gender), could have contributed to further marginalization of the participants of the study (hooks, 1990). For

example, my presence as a white researcher, alone, could have created an environment that forced participants to be vulnerable when not fully willing to share stories with a researcher who could not fully empathize with their experiences or gloss over something shared as insignificant. Further still, is the consideration of the gender makeup of student affairs skewing heaving toward women and the possibility of sharing conflicts I, as a man, cannot easily identify with or understand (Calhoun & Taub, 2014). Nonetheless, even by relying on existing networks of professional and personal friends in student affairs, I still worked to gain the trust of my participants and their willingness to share their stories and experiences. A first step in that process was sharing an open letter with all interested participants discussing my salient identities and motivations for why I was conducting this study. I further discuss this process in the later section on participant recruitment.

I am certain my personal and professional experiences have informed how I have conducted this study. My professional experience in higher education and student affairs informed an inevitable bias exists for how I constructed this study and navigated data collection and its interpretation. This bias is common in qualitative research and, as stated above, it is critical for researchers to develop an understanding and interrogate how their positionality may influence a research study. Additionally, I took additional measures to reduce bias and improve the reliability and validity of this study. For example, I ensured that all participants were interviewed with the same interview protocol. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and are available for external review. All participants received a full transcribed copy of their interview

transcripts and were asked to verify for accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My further use of peer debriefers challenged my thinking of interpretations and analysis of data.

Ultimately, my experiences were beneficial to this study due to my background as a student affairs administrator and higher education practitioner. While my racial identity does not align with the participants in this study, because I did not assume to know the experiences of the participants, I found myself asking for further clarification or descriptions of experiences providing a richer understanding of individual contexts and interpretations. The prior professional and personal relationships I had with a number of participants resulted in developing trust early in the interview process. The extended period I spent interviewing and shared personal connections with other participants allowed me to develop a strong rapport that encouraged candid sharing of stories and vulnerability for which I will be forever grateful.

Limitations

In addition to the strengths of this study, there are several limitations that should be noted and foregrounded. First, this study is limited by the identities that are represented by and within the participants of this study. While an attempt was made to sample a range of individuals across social identities, generalizations *cannot* and *should not* be made from the findings of this study for all racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level administrators. Rather, this study provides nuanced interpretations and an in-depth exploration to the participants represented in this study holding specific positions in student affairs that may represent some experiences of others holding similar identities or positions

59

Second, each participants' experiences are context-bound within their respective institutional contexts and formative experiences as an individual. Life events may not be similar for other individuals in student affairs serving as a mid-level administrator holding similar identities because of variations in upbringing, geographical, institutional, and self-identification.

Third, my reliance on personal and extended networks, professional association affinity groups, or social media groups of student affairs professionals limited who was exposed to an invitation in this research and able to participate. Additional individuals meeting this study's criteria may not have been in these groups and simply did not garner exposure to recruitment materials.

Fourth, the research of this design requiring three 60-90-minute-long interviews may have created a barrier for individuals willing and/or able to invest time and energy to share their experiences. One potential participant, upon receiving the Informed Consent Document and other study-related material responded with an email about their limited time and inability to participate. The initial exclusion of an incentive to participate in the study may also have prevented individuals from volunteering their time and willingness to divulge personal and professional details for this study.

Finally, my dominant social identities as a privileged white man may further limit who chooses to participate and feel comfortable enough to share their own story with me as the researcher (Stanley & Slattery, 2003). Researcher-participant interview dynamics present their own limitations that often are discovered during the interview process (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Jones et al., 2014; Riessman, 2008). Power and

personal relations between researcher and participant are constantly negotiated in narrative inquiry. Participants may not be willing to give long accounts of personal experiences with a stranger or unwilling to discuss specific relationship based on fear of retaliation or judgment (Riessman, 2008). This can severely limit the ability of a researcher to gain a full account and interpretation of a participant's experience. This issue was raised by one participant who explicitly mentioned,

> "during the first interview I was a little hesitant to disclose some things, I'm not going to lie…part of that is…being vulnerable enough to give you that power to let you into my head space and identifying that you know where is this information going to go…but I think for me it's understanding that the research that you're doing is adding to the gap of knowledge that we have around staff members that identify as staff of color and the struggles, achievements, or situations that are out there for us, and it's actually going to help in the long run. So, that's why I started to answer a little more open and say, 'yeah, these are my personal pieces.'"

In contrast, however, when asked "What does it mean having your story shared with a white person?," another participant commented,

> "sharing it with you is sharing it with someone who has some level of understanding of the baggage that inherently comes with my story… as opposed to someone going, 'Oh my God. That really happened?' I tell you something, you're like, 'Of course it happened because this is the way of the world.' So that's very different, but you got to know that, you've got to know that."

61

While I feel my steps described above created a comfortable, respectable, and transparent research environment, I recognize the personal responsibility I have for any perceptions of suspicion or hesitation that come with someone holding my identities (Leonardo, 2004) as a member of a group that benefits from the continued power over others (Bergerson, 2003).

Summary

In this chapter, I restated the focus of this study and explained my justification for using narrative inquiry to capture the complex experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators working at predominantly white institutions. I explained the process for identifying participants, the process used to gather information, and analyze the data garnered from this study. I provided my rationalization for selecting the data presentation methods, and steps taken to ensure quality and rigor of the study's findings. In the next chapter, I provide an overview of the participants in this study, their personal and professional backgrounds, as well as their narrative accounts solicited during the interviews.

CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPANT NARRATIVES

In this chapter, I provide participants' demographic information and a crafted narrative that was developed from each participant's interviews and reviewed documents. I begin with a brief introduction of each of the seven participants, their background information, and current professional role. To protect the individual identities, participants self-selected pseudonyms to identity them in all study-related materials: Jackie, Jackson-Evans, T. J., Lauren, Gabriel, Jesús, and Yvette. Names of other individuals mentioned by participants, names and locations of institutions, and specific job titles were also masked or assigned pseudonyms to increase the anonymity of participants. Following the participant background information, I provide a justification for the use of narratives crafted from the interview data and how the personal narratives were crafted for this study. I then provide the participants' individual narratives.

The central focus of this study was to better understand how minoritized student affairs administrators navigate their mid-level role and comprehend their perceptions of the impact of positional power dynamics and race has on their overall work. As such, this study sought to develop a nuanced understanding of the experiences for racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators within predominantly white institutions by understanding their current and previous work

experiences, personal influences, and illuminating ways in which racism continue to operate within student affairs.

As stated in Chapter Three, participant information was gathered from three separate semi-structured interviews that occurred over a period from July to December 2019. Of the seven participants, at least one interview occurred in-person with participants T. J., Jackson Evans, and Jesús. Due to distance and scheduling conflicts, the remaining interviews were conducted via Zoom video-conferencing. Each interview lasted between 40 -104 minutes, with the average interview lasting approximately 70 minutes and resulted in 373 single-spaced pages of transcribed interview notes. Document and content analysis of participant resumes and university websites also contributed to the development of the participant profiles and narratives for this study.

Participant Background Information

The seven participants' demographic data are presented in the following three tables followed by a short profile of each participant. The first table (See Table 1) provides the following information: participants' pseudonyms, age, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and other salient identities provided from the participants.

Six of the seven participants held a "director" job title at the time of the interviews. One participant held an "assistant dean" title (See Table 2). Participants were in their current positions from a period ranging from 1 year to 11 years. Most participants also reported to a senior-level administrator (e.g. vice-president, assistant vice-president, dean of students) within their division/area of student affairs and supervised anywhere from two to nine full-time professional staff members.

Table 1 Participant Demographics: Identity

Pseudonym (pronouns)	Age	Race/Ethnicity as Described by Participant	Gender as Described by Participant	Other Salient Identities Shared
Gabriel (he/him/his)	38	Asian/Vietnamese	Male	Heterosexual, First-Generation, able bodied
Jackie (she/her/hers)	38	Black	Female	Heterosexual
Jackson-Evans (he/him/his)	38	Black	Male	Gay
Jesús (he/him/his)	30	Hispanic	Male	First-Generation, Straight
Lauren (she/her/hers)	36	Black/African American	Woman	First-Generation, Heterosexual
T. J. (he/him/his)	31	African American	Male	Heterosexual
Yvette (she/her/hers)	44	Puerto Rican	Female	Heterosexual ,First-Generation; Spanish as first language; New Yorker

Six participants worked at 4-year public institutions, while one worked at a private 4-year institution. The location of the institutions varied across the United States, however, the majority of institutions were located in the South region of the country, and one participant was working at an institution in the Midwest region. Institutional enrollments ranged from 6,000 to 44,000 students (See Table 3).

Table 2 Participant Demographics: Professional

Pseudonym	Functional Area	Title	Years in Position	Years of Experience
Gabriel	Housing and Residential Life Programs	Director	2	14
Jackie	Fraternity and Sorority Advising	Director	11	12
Jackson-Evans	Fraternity and Sorority Advising	Assistant Dean	1	12
Jesús	Campus Activities Programs	Director	2	6
Lauren	Leadership Education and Development	Director	4	13
T. J.	Fraternity and Sorority Advising	Director	4	9
Yvette	Campus Activities Programs	Director	6	21

Table 3 Institutional Profile

Pseudonym	Type of Institution	Region of Institution	Approximate Size of Institution
Gabriel	4-year public	Southeast	11,000
Jackie	4-year public	Southeast	30,000
Jackson-Evans	4-year public	Midwest	44,000
Jesús	4-year public	South	6,000
Lauren	4-year private	South	13,000
T. J.	4-year public	South	28,000
Yvette	4-year public	Southeast	40,000

Participant Profiles

The following participant profiles were written by reviewing participant demographic sheets, member checked interview transcripts, participant resumes and current institutional websites to create a fuller picture of the current work setting. These

profiles are intended as an introduction to each participant prior to a comprehensive

narrative that follows.

Gabriel

Gabriel is a thirty-eight year-old Asian American man who also identifies as a

first-generation college student and received his undergraduate and graduate degrees

from the same institution in the south. Like many in student affairs, his undergraduate

involvement had a heavy influence on his career path. Gabriel's involvement in a

NASPA program to attract more underrepresented populations into student affairs, was

the biggest driver for his eventual entry into student affairs administration.

Following graduation, Gabriel held different positions in on-campus housing at

institutions across the country. Moving around and up through various positions over the

years, Gabriel currently lives in a rural community in the south with his family serving

as the director of on-campus housing for a mid-size public institution in a town with

approximately 60,000 people. He has been in his current position for 2 years and

oversees a sizeable office staff of resident directors, student assistants, administrative

and support staff. Gabriel reports through the division of student affairs, reporting to the

vice president.

Jackie

Jackie is a thirty-eight year-old Black heterosexual woman currently living in the

south where she has served as the director of Greek affairs. Originally from the New

York area, she attended college in the mid-Atlantic region at a historically white

institution. Heavily involved as an undergraduate student in student organization

leadership roles, including her sorority, her Greek advisor at the time encouraged her to explore graduate programs in student affairs. Jackie attended graduate school at a school in the South and has worked at two institutions as a full-time professional.

Jackie works at a mid-size, public, land grant institution where she has been for the past 11 years. She currently supervises four full-time professional staff and reports through an assistant vice president within the student affairs division.

Jackson-Evans

Jackson-Evans is a thirty-eight year-old Black man who identifies as gay. He grew up in Texas and spent the majority of his life in the state. Attending his HBCU undergraduate institution initially to become a high school teacher, he became exposed to student affairs from his involvement and eventual conversation with the dean of students who encouraged him and his twin brother to explore a career in higher education after realizing that they both did not want to continue as high school teachers.

At the time of our first two interviews, Jackson-Evans was working at a large public institution located in a rural community in the Midwest serving as an Assistant Dean and overseeing the fraternity and sorority community and a staff of 6 with three direct reports. He reported through the associate provost and dean of students office. Recently, Jackson-Evans made a transition to another institution to be closer to family and currently serves as a director of Greek affairs at a large public institution in the South.

Jesús

Jesús is a thirty year-old Hispanic man who also identifies as a first-generation college student and native Spanish speaker who was born along the southern border of Texas. His family moved to north Texas where he attended high school and came to his undergraduate institution to become a music teacher, a historically white institution in a much smaller town than where his family lived. Actively involved in student organizations and student leadership positions, his campus student employment evolved into a full-time position when he was continuing his education as a graduate student at the same institution.

Currently, Jesús is the director of student development overseeing a wide portfolio of student involvement programs including campus activities, student organizations, and leadership programming. The institution has an enrollment of under 10,000 students and has aspirations to become a Hispanic Serving Institution in the near future. Jesús supervises an office staff of three full-time professionals and reports to the dean of students within the division of student affairs. He has been in his current role for two years.

Lauren

Lauren is a thirty-six year-old Black/African American woman who grew up in Virginia with her mother and older brother. She is a first-generation college student that attended her undergraduate college in Virginia, a prestigious historically white institution. As a student she became heavily involved on campus as an orientation leader, resident assistant, and campus tour guide. Initially thinking she would be a psychologist

and teacher, her boyfriend at the time encouraged her to explore a career path in student affairs. She went on to attend her master's program working as an advisor for a fraternity chapter, where she developed her interest in leadership development programming.

After graduating, Lauren began working at a highly-selective private institution in the South in fraternity and sorority life. After four years, she left the institution for another private institution, also in the South where she worked with the fraternity and sorority community before transitioning to her current role in leadership programming. At the time of our interview, Lauren was serving as the director of student development, a role she has held for five years. She supervises two full-time professional staff and reports through a senior administrator within the Dean of Students office.

<div align="center">

T. J.

</div>

T. J. is a thirty-one year-old African American man who grew up in Louisiana, attended college in Alabama for his undergraduate degree and Florida for his master's program, all historically white institutions. As an undergraduate student, he was involved as a resident assistant, a member of his fraternity, and active in the campus ministry and student government. His supervisor at the time shared with T. J. the possibility of working in higher education and continuing the work he was already doing as a full-time professional.

T. J. has worked at his current institution in the South, a mid-size public institution, for five years as the director of Greek affairs in the city where he and his wife have lived since 2011 after receiving his first full-time job offer at a neighboring private institution, also working in fraternity and sorority life. He currently supervises two full-

time professional staff and reports through an associate dean within the division of student affairs.

Yvette

Yvette is a forty-four year-old Puerto Rican from New York City. She grew up in a racially and ethnically diverse community in a New York borough, attending college for her undergraduate and graduate degrees at a predominantly white institution in upstate New York. As an undergraduate student, Yvette worked for the Vice President for Student Affairs as a student worker that exposed Yvette to the career of student affairs, however, it was an older Latino student and close friend of Yvette's who encouraged her to explore student affairs as a future opportunity.

While finishing graduate school, Yvette began working full-time as a professional at another institution. Working with student activities and programming, Yvette transitioned to a role in fraternity and sorority life. Seven years ago, Yvette made a move to her current institution in the south where she oversees student activities and campus involvement. She supervises an office of seven full-time professionals, three direct reports, and reports through the Dean of Students Office.

Use of Narratives

One of the benefits to narrative inquiry is its ability to explore how individuals interact with the large social arena which they are a part, including environment, relationships with individuals, and political, and organizational pressures that exist (Jones et al., 2014). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe the collaborative nature of narrative research primarily because it relies on the development of a series of

71

negotiations between researcher and participant(s) to establish trust and gain access to relative and contextual perspectives of participants through their storied experiences. The collaborative nature allows for a deeper understanding of phenomena that may go undetected using other qualitative methods.

In the following section, I offer detailed information about the context which these individuals work and the most salient experiences from their background they wanted to share during our interviews. The participant narratives are presented to allow the reader an opportunity to experience the depth and nuance of each participant, and how their personal background and professional experience contribute to understanding their role as a mid-level student affairs administrator. The presentation of the participant narratives also provides the opportunity to hear the participant's individual stories and connect with them on a deeper level prior to analysis of this study's findings on a collective level, a point of contention within narrative inquiry research (Clandinin, 2013; Polkinghorne, 1995). The individual participant narratives are presented in the first-person, however before presenting the narratives, I provide an overview of how the narratives were constructed along with justification for writing them in first-person.

Construction of Participant Narratives

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) discussed challenges that may arise in narrative inquiry, including issues about the validity of narrative accounts and if they represent a reconstruction of memories or objective "fact." Social constructivists acknowledge individuals hold multiple meanings of reality and interpretations of experiences are largely context-bound (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The process of sharing narratives is

further believed to have a transformative experience, which represents a change in focus from individual meaning to co-constructed interpretations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mertens, 2014). Therefore, the aim of narrative inquiry is not to establish one generalizable truth but to provide context-specific accounts of many truths utilizing narratives.

The process for writing each participant narrative began with reviewing member checked transcripts and listening to the audio recordings of each interview multiple times. I organized the narratives by identifying key turning points in the participants' lives and experiences with racism in both their professional and personal lives. In constructing these narratives, I recognize the inherent risk, of what Fine (1994) describes as an ethical dilemma of having a narrative written and conveyed by an author with a dominant racial identity that "the power of my translation comes far more from my whiteness, middle-classness, and education than from the stories I tell. But my translation also colludes in structures of domination" (p. 150). Acknowledging this risk, I relied heavily on direct quotes, descriptions, and interpretations from participant interviews in the construction of the participant narratives. I utilized further member checks of constructed narratives and the use of peer debriefers with similar identities as the participants to ensure an accurate and critical presentation of individual narratives.

The inclusion of individual participant narratives are presented in first-person and serves to acknowledge some of the ethical and methodological considerations of narrative inquiry as presented by Clandinin (2016). First, the use of first-person in the presentation of the narratives accounts allowed me to foreground the voices and further

privilege the individual knowledge of the participants rather than attempt to restory accounts using my own words, placing distance between the participants' lived experience and the reader. Second, the inclusion of individual narrative accounts also allowed me to draw attention to the individual ways of knowing and ways in which knowledge and life experience help shape the narrative account of the individual participants and to "work against the dominant university narratives of research-- research which values single authorship, competitions, and ownership" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 41). Additionally, narrative inquiry privileges the experiences of participants in constructing meaning, which complements the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) and further nuances the experiences of middle managers in organizational literature by Approach/Inhibition/Avoidance Theory of Power (AIA) (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017).

Within CRT, the voice-of-color thesis recognizes and centers the experiences of racially minoritized people (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) to challenge dominant canons of discourse and information often found in research (Bell, 1995). Bell further contends narratives or counterstories can take many forms, including the "frequent use of the first person, storytelling, narrative, allegory, interdisciplinary treatment of law, and the unapologetic use of creativity" (p. 899). By using participant first-person "grounded in real-life experiences and actual empirical data and are contextualized in social situations that are also grounded in real life, not fiction" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 36), the narratives communicate the actual events and experiences of participants which further communicate nuanced information to better explain the experiences and continued persistence of racism and social inequality within student affairs.

74

Participant Narratives

Gabriel

"My partner jokes with me all the time that I have four or five different voices that I have. One is when I'm talking with my supervisors. One is when I'm talking to colleagues. One is when I'm talking to friends. One is when I'm talking to the family where she'll look at it and be like, 'What are you saying? Where did that even come from?'"

I've been in housing on a larger scale for the most part in a lot of different capacities. At a former institution I was over student success and retention, an academic initiative. I've done the student side, the administrative side, and then the academic side. When this job opened up, I actually applied for a couple of different jobs at that time, one in Baltimore and the one here. I actually got offered both and it was a decision that I had to make and really, a family decision. At my last institution I was driving an hour to work every day, an hour home every day. I only lived 12 miles away, but crazy just the amount of traffic there. Baltimore would've been the same thing. We wouldn't have been able to afford a house in the Baltimore area and we would have to drive an hour in out of the suburbs or out of the distant areas to get in. So we decided to make the move down here because I have children. I have two kids, three and five. Two years ago, they would have been one and three. So for me, it was more important to spend time with them as opposed to time in the car driving and going back and forth to work. So we made the decision to come down here to kind of concentrate on not only the job and experience,

but also the family. So that's kind of where I am. Three years later, I'm here as the Director of Housing.

Growing up, my family moved around a lot, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Louisiana. From fourth grade on, I was in Arkansas. I told myself that when I applied for jobs, I would be on one of the coasts. It would be East Coast or West Coast, I literally applied for schools and colleges, universities for jobs around each one of those coasts. Both of my parents were sponsored over during the Vietnam War and it was pretty hard to find a steady job for either one of them, so they kind of went where the work was and we moved around quite a bit. I think initially we went to Illinois because we had some family there that were already here. So my mom and dad would work odd jobs, ins and outs, just different places and capacities for a couple of years. Then we moved to New Orleans because there was family there. So I think it was more of like, "Let's try this state out and try this state out." In New Orleans, my dad was a fisherman. Deep sea fishing. He'd be off for a couple of weeks at a time or whatnot and then come back. So that was New Orleans and then we moved to Oklahoma for a bit and then to Arkansas for a bit. It wasn't until we got to Arkansas, I think, where things started to settle down a little bit for them job-wise. That's kind of where they ended up. So that's really the reason why we moved around is because we wanted to be... or we had support systems in those different states for family that have already been over here.

In school it was predominantly people of color that I was around, particularly a lot more African American and not as many Asian Americans or even Hispanic, Latinx populations. The school systems that my siblings and I got into were predominantly

76

African American, maybe 90%, 8% were white, and the other 2% were other. That's kind of the category where I fell into quite a bit, was the "other" category. When I went to college, although it was predominantly white, the environment and support systems I tended to navigate more toward were things with African American students. Part of that was probably due to the experiences I had growing up in either elementary or junior high, high school, I would try to hang out with the Asian kids, it was like, "Oh, well, who do you belong to?," a lot of times, the parents of the other Asian kids would own a restaurant, own a small shop, or have a company. My parents were going back and forth between jobs trying to put food on the table and I'm like, "Well, these are my parents" and usually be met with a response, "Oh, well, you're nothing so you don't get to hang out with us." That was alienating. I even saw that in college when the only time I was approached by the Asian organization was to boost their numbers or would say, "Hey, we don't have any Vietnamese people yet. Can you be our Vietnamese person?" I saw a similar thing at NASPA. I saw that if you're not already in with the *in group* or into the leadership roles, then it's tough to break into that and break into those conversations. So it felt clique-ish. It felt really alienating. That is honestly why I ended up joining an NPHC fraternity. That's why I hang out with a lot more black and African American individuals.

On top of that, my name is different from other individuals. All throughout junior high and high school, people had a hard time pronouncing my name. It was interesting because a lot of people who identified as white or Caucasian would either look at that and try to, I guess, continue to butcher it and as soon as I said it. So, for the longest time,

77

I used to actually go by an anglicized name that I had chosen just because it was easier for most people to pronounce. I think that my interactions with people that were people of color didn't care. They were like, "Okay, well that's just your name. That's just what it is." So it was almost like this setup where it was just more of a comfort level piece for me to be around that, around those individuals. It wasn't until I returned from a study abroad experience as a professional that I changed my name back to my given name. That was a struggle for some people to conceptualize, especially those individuals that have known me for a long time by my anglicized name. It was something that I felt I needed to do after visiting the different countries and really understanding culture a little more and needing to be more true and authentic with myself, and not kind of changing things just because it makes it easier for other people. But, needless to say, I have spent a lot of time navigating different spaces and changing up who I am for other people.

My journey into student affairs might sound familiar to some, the kind of the stories you hear about student affairs professionals and the student involvement piece and really getting involved, but I would say some of the more impactful pieces for me was a program that was called the Minority Undergraduate Fellowship Program, intended to recruit more underrepresented student into student affairs. I think it was 2000, was my sophomore year, I was asked by the Dean of Students if I would be interested in learning more about this because they were just starting the program. So they tried to identify minority students that were involved on some level in student leadership roles on campus. I think the MUF Program in general set me up pretty well with that because I was paired with a, at the time he was the director of the Enhanced

Learning Center, it was kind of a learning center on campus that just started, but I was paired with him as my mentor. For the next two years, we spent a lot of time behind the scenes talking about different things in student affairs. He'd take me to public meetings, go with him for a couple regional conferences for NASPA. A lot of different pieces there.

My long-term goal is still a vice president of student affairs at a four year institution. I know that's probably a few years down the road. I mean, my next short-term goal would be a dean of students somewhere, but a lot of it is that's kind of where I want to end up. I think that's been a goal since my days in the MUF Program. That's something where I think even in the profession, you have a predominantly white profession and predominantly white male profession, older white male profession. So for me, when I came through the program, a lot of it was talked about, instilled upon, and kind of just mentioned where, "We don't have that many Asian American senior leadership out there." At that point, I was like, "Yeah, we don't. We really don't." So just looking around the room, especially in the Southern region where I am and looking in the different areas, I've felt that that representation is probably something that's needed, or at least, something that I wanted to kind of aspire to. I know that there's not a lot of representation at the top for Asian American student. But I also feel like the different positions that I've had and the different environments that I've grown up in, I've been a very... I think I've been very cognizant of the representation in general. So not just for the API or APIDA community, but for all communities. My drive to get there isn't so that I can check that off and say, "Hey, I'm there," as an API, senior level VP, but instead

79

it's I'm here now and I can now kind of talk about issues or bring to fruition or bring to front what are some of these pieces that are happening because I even think that in my position as a Director of Housing here at this institution, I've seen myself in those kind of conversations. These types of things wouldn't have happened if I wasn't sitting at this table.

I think about just the different pieces that I have that I've dealt with growing up. Because again, it was from a pretty poor working class family growing up when I think about the class, right, the social class pieces of it. It's interesting because I remember one time, when this is... it's just a statement somebody made, but... So I did an internship in New York for the MUF Program. When I was up there, I think my supervisor at the time probably could have used some coaching on language and things, but at the time she said, "Wow, you're the first Oriental Southern speaking person that I've met that is in a black fraternity." And I'm like, "Wow, those are the pieces that you notice about me. Those are the things, not the internship, not the work that I did and all that." I think within the APIDA (Asian Pacific Islander Desi American) community in general, there's a large number of individuals I think would identify with the kind of the imposter syndrome of am I supposed to be here? What's going on? What's happening? A lot of that is because of, I think, of where we come from or what we've done or how we've grown up. So for me, I think within my work I still see some of that and I still see some of those pieces where I'm actually... the only other Asian or APIDA member that I know of at this university works in IT. I'm the only one that's kind of at the student affairs leadership thing that is an Asian American. At the same time, there is not a big Asian

community either at my current institution. When we think about the Asian community, actually at a lot of institutions, we're thinking about our international students. That's where our Asian community comes from is, or at least when we're talking about them, it's like, "Well, aren't they international students?" And so I was like, "No, not all of them. We have some that aren't." So I would think that's a big piece.

In my current role, I think the expectation of mid-level professionals here is that, and maybe... and I'm not sure if it's because I'm a director now of a unit or if it's because of the mid-levels in general, but I know for me the expectation is that this is your shop and so anything goes wrong or whatever happens, it's on you kind of a piece. At the same time, I would think that the expectation as well is that not only do you have your unit that you're responsible for, but anything and everything that we're doing as a division is also your responsibility. You're almost like a workhorse for your division, for your department, but then also if we need fillers in some of these other areas, some of these extra programs that we're putting on, divisional pieces, then it's you that's stepping up or at least you to get your folks to corral them together and on board and kind of on board with the thing. Something that I think has been interesting for me to discover is that our state legislature runs a lot of things here. So if something were to happen on campus and they're like, "I don't like that," then all of a sudden next week we get an email from our senior administration that says, "Hey, maybe we should look at changing this because I don't know if it's going to work for our students." For me, it's like, "Is it for our students or is it because somebody's upset? What's going on?" Then that plays a big role in it because I know that even here, there was a major, major incident that

happened I think four years ago with the U.S. flag right outside of our steps to the library where somebody was either stepping on it or burning it or something. We didn't step in and it was like, "Okay, well." But the legislators stepped in and then something happened. So I think that it's interesting because the expectation, I think, is that we're kind of running our shop, but as long as it's kind of within the parameters that they're setting for us kind of a thing.

I also sense that expectations or accountability vary based on racial or ethnic identity. I've seen on many occasions where the accountability is harder or harsher on individuals that do identify as people of color as opposed to those of our white counterparts. For our white counterparts, it's like, "Well, okay, well, do better next time," but for individuals of color, it's like, "Well, do better and I'm going to write you up and we're going to talk to HR." There have been a couple of those situations where that's been the case. Beyond the work, there are a lot of things that kind of pop off either in the community or even on campus when it comes to that. But I would say that the expectations are a little different. I've even benefited from those expectations from time to time as opposed to my counterparts who identify as black or African American. I'm not sure if that's because of my, I don't want to say ability, but my skill set that I've learned throughout the years to adapt to conversations, to leadership styles, to supervising styles, and even to adapt to, I don't want to say get what I want, but make sure that I play within the, I guess, the arena that has been set up for me in order for me to not be at the forefront of someone's cross-hairs. I think that within the APIDA community in general, I think, we're always individuals that will probably stand more

toward the back and allow other people to do things, but we'll do it from just the backend, right? We'll do it all back here. We don't need praises. We don't need any of that, but I would say that I probably benefited from them more often than not and I'm not sure if that's because of who I am as a person, or who I am as what my identities kind of put out there.

Imposter syndrome, the perception of the model minority myth, the perceived expectation of performing better is also interesting. I think for me, and it's funny, maybe not funny, but it is funny that it's been joked around quite a bit from some senior level administrators of, "Well, it's because you all work hard." "Like you all? What do you mean you all?" So it's the whole Asians work hard kind of thing, make sure things are right and all that, but I would say that the expectation is there because I think it's been socialized to be there. It's been understood to be there. It's the same way with our student leaders. On time to time, I think we put a lot on our APIDA student leaders and thinking like, "They should be able to get this because of what we're used to."

As the only Asian American director there's this hyper-visibility. I have tried to for the past two years and I even told my Dean of Students this, is that there was some times where I'm in a meeting where I feel like I have to dial it back, where I have to be like, "I'm not..." Because for me, and this could again be a self-perceived thing, but for me, it feels like I'm always the one bringing up new ideas or bringing up solutions or bringing up different things that we'll talk about or different discussion items. For me, "Well, maybe I should dial it back a little and give others a chance to do it." The response has always been, "Well, I don't know if they would if you didn't bring it up."

83

Then the perception then becomes, "Well, Gabriel can do it," or, "He'll be able to." I don't know if that's more of a work ethic piece or more of kind of what that has to do with my racial or ethnic identities within that, but I know that for me, I'm more conscious of it. I'm conscious of what types of things I bring up or timeliness or what I take on and how I do that because for me, I would do it and get it done within that timeframe that needs to be done. I just don't know if it needs to be me all the time.

I'm the youngest still whether that's age and experience at the senior table. Other people have been here 20 years, 15 years, 25 years, 12 years. For me, a lot of bringing things up and why I feel like I need to hold back sometimes is because I always wonder, "Are my colleagues sitting around this table going to think, 'Well, this is a new kid,' or, 'He's young. He still has a lot of stuff that he thinks that we can do,' whether that's because they tried it before and have not worked or whether... whatever the case may be." I think that that's a big dynamic of it as well is who else is around that table and what perceptions do they kind of see? Is it because of my age? Is it because of my experience? Or is it because of a race or ethnicity or where I grew up? So I think a lot of those things, there's probably not a day that goes by that I don't step into a meeting and think to myself, "How can I arrange my thoughts in this conversation in order to make it the most productive?"

Jackie

"But the moral of the story, there is a little bit of censoring because people are watching. And, it's not because I'm ashamed of what I believe or say, it's because as a Black woman, I don't need the smoke."

I feel like I'm different than most of my other colleagues who are Black women because, when I sit in those sister circles of other Black professionals, their experiences are ones where they're having these shitty experiences with microaggressions, people trying to touch their hair at work, and people undervaluing them. I've never felt that, which just makes me extremely lucky in where I work. I've yet to have a bad supervisor. I've yet to have someone above me in a supervisory role microaggress me. The racism I have faced comes from students, mostly my white IFC men, but not from my colleagues. I've never worked in an environment that was nothing less than inclusive and welcoming and understanding. Part of my experience has to be filtered through an understanding that I feel there are two Jackies in the same body. Being the child of immigrants who worked in white spaces, I have been socialized since I was a child that there were certain things we just did not do outside of the house. There is the Jackie at work and there is the Jackie at home. So I think that may create some biases to how I perceive my work environment.

Growing up, I was always one of those super overachieving students. You name it, I was involved in it. Varsity athlete in three sports, was in student government, the president of a bunch of clubs. In college, that stuck. I still I hold the record for being in the most student organizations and holding office at the same time. But I think because of my involvement and my overachievement I have always stood out and attracted the attention of the power players wherever I was. After joining my sorority, my Greek advisor, a white man, came to me and started getting me plugged into different areas of campus and different leadership programs. By my junior year, he introduced the idea of

getting into higher education. He certainly was someone who nourished my whole journey into student affairs.

To this day, most of my mentors have been white straight people, mostly white straight men. Maybe it's because where I've navigated or where I landed, but I do think that part of that is my desire to be in control and knowing that I am playing the game in order to get ahead. I have been lucky. For me, I just got to be at the foot of the power players throughout my life and hoped and prayed those power players are good people. Where, a lot of my Black colleagues have Black mentors, I don't have anyone in mind. I don't have any Woman of Color besides my one Black professor who influenced my affinity for travel. I don't think there are enough women of color, especially in fraternity life, who are power players that would have gotten me to the position that I am in today. Now, part of me sees myself as that for other people. I get a lot of calls from graduate students and young professionals who reach out for mentorship or want to know how I have navigated. I will take that on, but I didn't have that in my journey. Now, well, if there was no one for me, I guess I'm going to be that for others now. That's not sad or embarrassing to me, but I do think that's really unique.

My relationships with my white fraternity men and their advisors are not as great because, at the end of the day I don't think the majority of them trust me. Part of that might be because I work below the Mason Dixon line and for a lot of them, I'm the first time they're interacting with a Woman of Color in authority. When I first got to my current institution, a chapter advisor of the Delta Sigma Phi chapter sent an email to the dean of students pushing back on hiring me. I'll never forget the quote, I still have the

message. He said, "What does a Black woman know about running a majority community?" That lit a little fire under me and I was like, "Watch me work." But I've never forgotten that and I don't think a lot of that has changed. When I do get blatant racist comments thrown my way from students or anyone, I know I don't have the ability of responding the way I want. I've had drunk fraternity men call me Harambe, the gorilla that got shot, to my face, and have to choose not to react. I posted that on Facebook and people commented, "you walked away?" I have a job. I'm not gonna let some drunk pukey ass frat guy insult me and then me lose my shit and get fired. Because, he wins. I've had to do that a couple of times. I just don't have the luxury of reacting and that is the added layer of my job that I don't think white professionals have to deal with.

On social media, I have learned that I need to dial it back a bit. Normally, I will tweet whatever the hell I want, but I also do that slightly censored because I know people are watching. Greek life is one of those high profile areas, but as one of the two highest ranking Black women in student affairs at this institution, for some reason people are following my social media and looking at what I'm saying on my private accounts. Recently, I friended my current supervisor on Facebook, not because I want to be friends with her, but because I want her to see what my life is like outside of work. I want her to know what I am doing so that she can defend it when people go to her and complain that I posted something or do something in my private life. Even with that, I still feel the need to censor who I am or what I post because the time and energy required to defend stuff is time and energy that I could be spending with chapters and

87

students that actually need me as opposed to some white student or alum that is upset. I don't have time for that garbage.

My personal look, same thing. I spend good money on good clothes, dry cleaning, and makeup to look the part. My other white colleagues who can be just their regular ole selves, but I can't be that person because there is definitely this monitoring I feel. I have been in situations where donors or alumni of my IFC fraternities will look to my associate director, a white woman, and say, "Hi, you must be the director." Thank god she has the awareness to correct them and direct them to me, but I have to navigate looking a specific way or I lose credibility. My hair is going to be done every four to six weeks without failure. Why? Because it's important for me not to look like Bob Marley, and because unkempt hair scares the white people. I shouldn't even have to think about shit like that, but those are parts of my identity and the layers of the game that no one else has to deal with. I just had to learn what's not going to scare people in this space or wherever I am.

The game is even carried into my personal life. I think every Black woman, especially mid-level professionals, goes through this, but I'm really serious about my birth control. I am not going to show up unmarried and pregnant at work. That ain't going to happen. Not that there's anything wrong with that, but I've watched other Black women get chewed alive for that shit. I heard the whisperings, "What kind of model is she setting for other students of color?" "Where's the dad?" So, you ain't going to catch me. One, I don't want children, but still very mindful of that. The other thing, and this is gonna sound really fucked up, but I don't date guys with cornrows. Even though there is

nothing wrong with the way our hair comes out of our heads, I totally bought into the white supremacy patriarchy model of what is appropriate. I know at the end of the day, people will pass judgement on him and that judgement will carry over to me. The fact that I even have that thought is wrong. I know that's wrong. It's fucked up. It's raw. It's like self-hate, but I'm painfully aware of that. So, even down to the men I date, there's a certain corporate look that I am more attracted to because of the game I have to play.

Even though I have been mentored by a lot of kick-ass white people, I do think it is fair to say I have been socialized to perform whiteness. Over the years, I have been able to test the waters and see how Black I can be in certain spaces by scanning who is in the room or really just trial by fire. One of my most trusted mentors, a white woman, damn near kicked my knee off in a meeting for calling out the university president as a racist. After she said, "You're not wrong, but that is not the way we can approach that, and I don't want you to be seen as the angry Black woman in the room, because you have so much good shit to say." So, I have been able to navigate and be successful by playing the game. I get asked all the time what is my secret and I share the same thing I tell my NPHC students. "You have to play the game. There's one rule, do not scare the white people. Rule number two refer back to rule number one. Do not scare the white people. If you don't scare the white people, you can do whatever the hell you want. The second you scare them shit is going down."

I think by learning the game from some really good white people who knew that I needed to learn the rules, my own intellectual and professional ability, coupled with having parents that modeled what it was like to existing in white spaces helped me get to

89

where I am today. So I am not new to having to navigate white spaces, so it never surprised me that our field would be any different than how I grew up. However, I definitely have the dynamic that you just can't be the same person at home that you are at work. Now, as I've gotten older and my career has progressed, those two people have come closer together. Good or bad, I think I'm just very lucky and I play the game to win. I think I'm more sad that so many of my colleagues have this shitastic experience for such a long time, and then they either just leave the field, or they just come to accept this is what it means to be in the field. That doesn't make me happy.

Jackson-Evans

"To be a gay man of color overseeing a very historically white fraternity and sorority system in the Midwest, down the road from where the Ku Klux Klan was established. That's a big deal!"

I went to school to become a high school teacher. My brother and I attended the same HBCU and were both majoring in secondary education. We were involved in everything you could think of, we joined our fraternities (different ones) we were in student government, served as orientation leaders, I was even homecoming king! As a student, I was working in student support services and started getting exposed to the thing that was student affairs, although I did not know it at the time. Our last semester, both my brother and I decided that we no longer wanted to be high school teachers and visited with the Dean of Students. She talked to us about what we were involved in and what we were passionate about. After going through the list, she said to us, "it sounds like you guys would want to go into higher education and work in student affairs." We

had no clue what that was, so she talked to us about what she did and what this thing

called student affairs was all about. You know, coming from a small HBCU, there was

not any talk about higher education programs, graduate assistantships, or even how to

navigate the application process. Thinking about it, if we never had that conversation

with our Dean of Students, I have no idea where we would have ended up. So, my

brother and I started researching programs and found a school, a PWI, not too far away

from home that accepted us and offered us assistantships to help pay for tuition. My first

graduate assistantship exposed me to a lot of opportunities and experiences that I still

cherish. My supervisor, unbeknownst to me at the time, would become a great mentor,

one of my closest friends, and a surrogate father figure. After I graduated with my

masters, my brother and I also started our doctorate programs later that year. I think from

a young age we both were conditioned to seize any opportunity that afforded to us

because, for people that look like us, there are not a whole lot of opportunities. I was still

a graduate assistant, but my mentor pushed me out of the nest and said he was not going

to renew my position. At the time, I resented it, but looking back I am grateful for him

forcing me to find a full-time job, because you can't be a student all of your life.

I have now worked as a full-time professional at six different institutions of

varying sizes, campus cultures, and experiences that have shaped me as a professional.

They have also taught me a few things. One, I need balance and working at a smaller

institution I was doing too much that I never had time to focus on one thing. Two, I want

to thrive under a supportive supervisor and not having one is detrimental to your mental

health. Leaving my first institution and going into the second gave me the first real

experience of what is was like to have conflict with a supervisor. From a mental health standpoint, now that I look back, I think that was the first time that I had remotely thought about mental health concerns. I would get into the parking lot and would have slight panic attacks. Then on the days when I knew that I would have my one on one with her, I dreaded even more going in. The environment that was created was one that made me feel diminished as a professional and I only stayed for a year.

My fourth institution taught me a lot about values needing to be aligned. They talked a lot about diversity and wanting to hire more diverse staff, but when I arrived there were eight other men of color that were hired at the same time. A little over a year later, six had left, five of which were for pay. So, you can say you value shit all you want, but if your actions as an institution do not match that talk, your values are out of whack. I left that institution because they were playing in my face telling me, "oh, we don't have the money" to pay staff a decent wage, but would go around and add another white administrator to the payroll. That did not sit well with me. The last institution I was at, I was chasing a title and a paycheck. I had the fancy office, great view, part of senior leadership, and a paycheck to match but, I was miserable. So, I had to make some choices. Did I want to continue chasing this notoriety and title only to be forced to "tow the company line" and sit down and be grateful for the opportunity or, get out and do something that was going to be good for my mental health, my social life, and simply be the best damn director I could be. I made some choices.

I have climbed and held every position possible on my way up the career ladder. I followed the blueprint, the roadmap that people say you are supposed to follow. Part of

that I know is because, as a Black man, we have always been told either overtly or covertly that the vice presidency or presidency is far and few between for a lot of us, so if you have a terminal degree and the opportunity presents itself, you for damn sure better take it! Especially in predominantly white spaces, people need to see us. The white folks need to know we exist and are able to do this too. I see far too many of my fellow colleagues of color working or having their terminal degrees and many of them are saying, "I just want to be a vice president. I want to be a vice president somewhere." That is all well and good but, I have started to ask myself some existential questions. "Why do I have to be a vice president or a dean?" "Why can I not just be a damn good director?" I do not have to have the fancy title or sit in the fancy chair to make a difference. I can make a difference at any level and make some impactful change for students.

I had a therapist once tell me, "Along this journey, it sounds like you have done a lot for Dr. Jackson-Evans, but what have you done for just Jackson-Evans? And, Jackson-Evans sounds like he is suffering." I think a lot of times we, or maybe just I, see these folx[1] of color in these positions of institutional authority and think that is great. But, I never thought to ask the question, "at what cost?" Maybe I chased clout too fast, maybe I chased the notoriety or just navigated the roadmap that way I thought I should. Some may think that I failed; I certainly thought that. If nothing at all, I think this

---

[1] A derivative of "folks", folx is a term used to "indicate [queer/trans]/gender-diverse community and to denote a politicized identity" This term is additionally used to be explicit in the visibility of trans and queer identity within communities of color.

professional journey has taught me that I did not fail. I just realized what I value is different. And so, contentment versus joy. I have not felt joy in a very long time, seems like ages. But, I had to realize that I was chasing everything for Dr. Jackson-Evans to the detriment of Jackson-Evans.

Since I made the most recent transition back closer to home and I am at a new institution, I am in a much better professional headspace. Personally, I am getting better, but knowing what has happened in Dallas/Fort Worth with the Botham Jean case and more recently, with Atatiana Jefferson[2] has definitely rocked my world. Knowing that these murders are going on so close to home and seeing how it affects my Black students and colleagues, the trauma that comes across, it is palpable. However, overall I know the transition is for the better. It has been interesting having some folx ask me if I miss the Midwest and if I miss my last institution. While I miss the people I worked with, I do not miss the experience and there's nothing that would take me back. The racism and discrimination I faced in the Midwest, I feel, was more overt than what I had ever experienced in Texas. I can count on one hand the amount of times I was knowingly called a nigger in Texas. It was far less than the amount of times I was called it in my two and a half years in the Midwest. I think people were more emboldened about it there.

---

[2] Botham Jean and Atatiana Jefferson were two incidents of Black people murdered in their own home by police within the Dallas/Fort Worth area in 2018 and 2019 (Emily & Jaramillo, 2019).

Professionally, I believe I reached a place where I have devoted my entire professional life to this work, and have proven myself in a lot of ways, to have the ability to be competent in this work. So with that, there comes a certain bravado, but also understanding and knowing to be humble in the work because there are still things that you can learn. While there are still stressors of the job, the mental health component is at the front of my mind. I have been there at a place where mental health has crippled me, and I don't want to get back to that. I still think about it. However, I am not willing to surrender my identity for the sake of the professional role, be devoid of opinion, my own thought process, and be a good little soldier and tow the line.

Jesús

"I've experienced multiple microaggressions, to this extent now, they're not macro, they're just racist!"

Representation and visibility is huge for me. Unfortunately, I think I have experienced both ends of the visibility spectrum. There are times when I feel like everyone, students, faculty, and staff all see me and know where to find me. Then, there are other times when I am pretty sure no one knows who I am. When I was a student here, one of the biggest things I noticed was that I didn't see myself represented in any of the organizations on campus. Working here, I see the same thing among the lack of representation in the faculty and staff. I am the youngest director at the university and I am the only Hispanic male staff member in a director-level position. Yet, I am constantly pulled in multiple directions of people asking for my input or valuing my opinion. Sometimes I feel like I am the Hispanic male representative for the entire

95

campus and that is a lot of pressure. Then, there are other times when I walk into a room and get called a random name or get confused for the other Hispanic male who works on campus. I just feel some sort of way.

I grew up in South Texas, on the border. My hometown was 100% Hispanic. There was one person that didn't look like me and they were Puerto Rican. My family moved to North Texas when I was in high school which was a huge culture shock for me, but I still had a great support community after we moved. My first year of college was different. I never really thought about my identities and what they meant to me until I didn't have the support system around me and everyone around me didn't look like me. I didn't find the Hispanic community right away, I didn't even know there was a Hispanic community, on campus or in the surrounding community. When my parents dropped me off on campus the first time, they even said, "What the hell are you doing moving here?" I was lucky to have had the one Latino resident assistant who spoke Spanish and happened to be from Mexico. Meeting that one person put me and my parents at ease, now I try to be that person for other students. I feel a sense of duty to other Latinx students. It's why I am willing to volunteer and why I'm willing to stay, especially when it comes to my personal community or students that I know are struggling to connect or coming from a similar background as me. I feel a duty to this population. So that has played a significant role in how I work with students and how I do my job.

Here's what sucks, though. I know that this institution can do a better job and must do a better job of recruiting and retaining Latinx professionals. Our Latinx student

population is growing and this institution has a desire to be a Hispanic Serving

Institution within the next few years. Yet, we have less and less people in staff that look

like me. So, because of who I am and, because I can speak Spanish, I get pulled to other

offices all the time to be a translator or to be a representative on a committee for Latinx

students or first-generation students. I am frequently asked, "Hey, we need a translator

here. This student's parents need help understanding this document about financial aid."

To some extent, I want to take pride in the work that I do and being able to be there for

students. At the same time, it puts me in a weird spot because I still have to do my job

and it is not always a possibility to take time out of my work and I don't get rewarded or

compensated for that. It can be heart-wrenching because of how much I care about my

people and people in general. I have my limits to how much I can keep giving of my

time and energy to always help out these other areas around campus that do not have

Latinx representation. If I don't have the time I will recommend other individuals, but

slowly, individuals that I could depend on no longer here. So, I don't know what the

future holds for me or the students because it can be stressful and I don't always want to

be the person they call upon. I have my own job to do and with our current Latinx

student population, we should have more individuals that look like me in leadership

roles to do this job.

We don't have a lot of Hispanic male faculty or staff that are able to do some of

these other duties so I pretty much become the representative for the entire Hispanic

community. I don't even consider myself an expert on some of these areas. Besides

feeling like my identity is being tokenized when the institution could just hire more

people that look like me and have similar skills sets, I have experienced multiple

microaggressions of people confusing me for someone else. At this point I don't even

call them micro or macroaggressions, it's just racist! There was another Latino male who

worked in our residence life area that would often get confused for me and me confused

for him. It got to the point where I was getting his mail and duty reports from our

campus police department thinking I was him. My wife also works here, she's also

Latina. I also have a Latina who works for me. I have students and other staff members

who regularly confuse those two. Sometimes people think I'm cheating on my wife

because of how much time I spend with my supervisee. It's exhausting and not

excusable when it's repeated, it's just offensive.

The senior leadership here, my supervisor, doesn't seem to get it. He's a white

guy and there are times when I have to sit through a meeting where he will ask if we're

having tacos or burritos, stereotypical Mexican accent included, for a Hispanic Heritage

Month program in front of a room of all white directors. No one said anything, not one

word. I feel like I'm not always the right person to correct a supervisor. I question if that

is my space. I don't want to always speak out about Hispanic issues, but I will if I have

to. At the same time, I'm new to this role and I'm a young director and I want to be able

to grow. I have to play a part sometimes. I have to weigh the potential consequences of

calling out this shit show and what it might mean for my ability to advocate for students.

My role gets political at times.

As a student, I was able to find my niche here and navigate the campus. As a

director and a staff member, it worries me that there may be other students who are not

able to do that. A couple of years ago, we were definitely focused on becoming an HSI and being able to prep staff and faculty to help Hispanic students. That is not necessarily a priority this year. There are other priorities, I guess. I feel that I have shared concerns like especially when we talked about how to better serve our students, but I think my voice is only heard when I am being asked for my assistance. I don't know if I'm heard or if I'm ready to speak on behalf of the community on a larger scale because I'm not necessarily the expert, but at the same time, when no one does it, I feel like I need to do something. I don't feel like I should have to go beyond my job responsibilities, but it's hard not to when you care so much about your population. So to me, representation is big and it should be here, but it's not. This past year or so I have definitely been more outspoken about that.

Lauren

"The thing is, is that there's a lot of focus on faculty and students. No one ever says the word staff here, staff is literally a four letter word. It's like, well, we don't we don't really do that. So who does do it? At this point, it's like fend for yourself."

This is an institution that keeps screaming about how they care about equity, diversity, and inclusion, but the leadership teams are quite homogenous. Recently, I had to submit a bio for our director staff web page and before I submitted mine, I looked at what was already up to mirror what everyone else had written. I scroll down the page and it's just all white people; there were only four African Americans, two men, one woman, and myself out of twenty-five people. Yet, there are people of color who have been here for over a decade and that haven't moved into a senior leadership role. My

friend who runs the campus events area has been here for over 10 years and has had to fight to get where he is now.

A few of the other directors of color make a joke that there are two people of Color this institution will promote; the rest of us, it will never happen. These are individuals who have bought into the institutional way of doing things and don't question it. Being a striver institution, meaning it will do anything to white knuckle its way to achieve higher rankings, individuals who rock the boat are shunned. So, along with being a striver institution is ensuring people being hired are going to bring the "Ivy League Way" and not jeopardize the rankings game they are trying to play here. So, if you buy into that and not question much, you get quite rewarded. Unfortunately, there are people on this campus, specifically, people of Color, who get relegated to these holes. They don't get any attention, they don't get any resources, they don't get asked for new initiatives. Basically, they didn't buy into the institutional way, were adamant about speaking up and now have no influence whatsoever, just being waited out and hoping they get the hint and leave.

Growing up, my mother's way of parenting was to expose my brother and me to a lot of people who did not look like us. My mother did that because she thought it would help keep us successful throughout life and, I would say that it probably has. I have been able to figure out how to navigate very white environments quite well. Also, coming from my former institution, also private and privileged, I was primed for the environment here. Unfortunately, staff coming from a state institution, regional institution, or community college, you're going to want to wrap this up real quick,

because you are not going to do well here. I have seen that time and time again. For People of Color, it's even harder to navigate this environment when there is not a lot of folks that look like us in leadership and, those that do, aren't willing to challenge the system and risk losing the title or seniority they have achieved. So, some of the other directors of color have built a support network for each other where other staff of color we know can have moments of venting about our experiences where we know those conversations are not going to wind up somewhere else and try to build this internal support network to help them thrive here.

This institution is at a place where folks are literally saying out loud, "this place kills Black professionals!" We have had three people die here in the past couple years due to health reasons because of the way they have worked here at this institution. Staff members will say that, but I have students of color who will come check on me and go, "Are you okay? Are you alright? You should go home." Yet, I don't feel I can be fully transparent with them and I have to mask my emotions when a student of color is trying to have a conversation with me because they are dealing with enough as it is. I don't want them to worry about me, I don't need them to take on the role of counseling me in addition to navigating this place, that's not what this is. I want them to take care of themselves. I sort of, you know, buck up and smile and say, "Everything's good." Then I figure out how to offload that and another way whether it is with a colleague or go off campus and do whatever I need to do. I think that I'm good at that, but for our younger professionals, we try to get them to go home and figure out some other healthy things to do.

I recently led a professional development session at a national conference for new professionals and I just cried the whole time. A lot of the people in the audience were newer student affairs professionals of color and are now living in nowhere land. No one had told them that their life had to extend beyond the campus they work on. Some said, "Lauren, we are just lonely!" It was the most heartbreaking thing, but no one had that conversation with them. I have been lucky to find things to do in the local community and am quite involved in some nonprofit organizations. However, depending on the city it can be very hard to break into the local Black community if you are not a member of an NPHC organization or come from an HBCU. I have neither of those experiences, so my way of finding Black friends in this city is I just did all of the things I normally would do and I found the Black girls who were there. I took them with me and made a group of friends and connected them all together because, they too, were looking for other Black friends, but didn't necessarily know how to navigate Black [Southern City]. Now I gather probably a group of 20 Black women every other month. I pluck them from all these different contacts and they might invite someone else. However, we all have this same notion of "Black [Southern City] is really hard to break into," but none of these women are in student affairs or work at the institution. On campus, I've started to gather Black women across campus for lunches and snacks and introducing folks to each other because I realized eventually that nobody was going to do that. When I was younger here, I assumed somebody else will do that, someone older. Now, I am 36 and I'm like, "well, Lauren, now boo, that's you." I am now the older one, so now I need to do that.

As a supervisor, I had a program coordinator who I hired, who abruptly left the institution. She and I did not have a fantastic relationship because of I think she was the epitome of white guilt, white privilege, white fragility, and white tears. She was that on a cereal box. The way that I supervised her, or sort of my leadership style to her felt too much. I wasn't as I guess, lovey dovey and emotional as she needed me to be. The way that I spoke to her, the way I would challenge her, or the way that I supported her made her feel like I did not care for her as a human. What I realized, she was someone who wanted me to hug her every day, to give her a sticker to tell her that she was amazing. She wanted to come to my house, she wanted to eat my food, she wanted to be invited to things on the weekends, she wanted this very maternal, soft, Brene Brown-esqu supervisory experience. That is not who I am as a person. Eventually she started going to my bosses (both white men) and crying to them about me. My direct boss, we've had very large conversations about how he reacted during that time period, took her side, hands down--not to the point that I was ever reprimanded or fired, or even held accountable, but I knew by the way that he was reacting that he had taken her side. So then before she left, she had an exit interview with our dean of students where she cried to him. He, then went to my boss and, my boss relayed to me some of the things that she had said in that meeting. I said, "So when is our dean of students going to talk to me, or when are you, my direct supervisor going to talk to me about what actually was happening? Because neither one of you have come to me or said anything."

Eventually, I printed up probably 10 articles and resources for him and [our dean of students], about white guilt, and about white fragility, and white tears. And I said, "I

need both of you to read these. And then we'll have a meeting." And my boss read them and was like, "I did not know that this was a thing. I didn't know these concepts existed." And then I proceeded to basically go over multiple examples of white women in our workplace who exemplify what is in these articles. I said, "Nine times out of 10, who they're upset with are people of color. So I want you to know that this is what you're playing into." So we have all these conversations and I said, "At the end the day, neither one of you white men, neither one of you came and said anything to me. You let this young white woman come in here and cry to you and let her state her case. The person who's been here the longest, that's been working with you the longest that you see the most every day that's been producing for you. None of you said anything. And so how am I supposed to take that?" I think my Dean of Students was super surprised I sent him an email stating we need to meet and asking him to read those articles. I told both the Dean of Students and my boss, "I'm sick of all of it and I'm sick that you all have allowed this person to come in here and disrupt an environment that didn't need to be disrupted all because she is insecure, and lacks confidence. All because this was the first time she was reporting to a woman of color and she didn't know what to do with that." At that point, we all had a huge conversation around the dynamics of our department, and the privilege that was going on, and the white tears that were happening, and how that was making people, especially myself, of color, feel in this department, and that they needed to do a better job of becoming aware of that.

Luckily, with my boss, we have gotten to a better place and he knows that I will question him on decisions. He knows that I am willing to challenge him and hold him

accountable to things that we have talked about. More recently, he has been telling me, "I appreciate your directness. I want you to keep doing that." However, everyone is not there of course and at the end of the day I could experience professional repercussions for being too direct that he didn't feel like that was the right time, even though he told me I need to be that person. That's a hard thing that I don't think any of my white colleagues have to wrestle with. They can say what they want to say and still be gainfully employed. They won't experience any repercussions. Not so much myself. I have to be very thoughtful in ways that my other white colleagues don't, and if I was not in tune that, I can be professionally hurting myself and not even realizing it for just being myself.

We scream authenticity all the time. We scream it as an institution and we scream it as a field of student affairs. We scream vulnerability all the time and, to be honest, for many of us with marginalized identities, those two words are highly detrimental to us in the workplace. I can't be authentic with everyone in every space, and I can't be vulnerable with every person in every space. I have to figure that out every time I walk into a different room. Every single time. That is taxing, that is mental work, that is difficult, and that is a hard thing to teach. For People of Color, you got to figure out how to get through. Some of us are great at that and some of us aren't. The ones who are not great at it, we either leave or we get ostracized very quickly.

T. J.

"Whether it be connection just to assimilate or connection for survival. It might be that feeling like I have to "survive." I don't mean survival in the sense of life or death, but

105

normalization, being normalized in the specific space, trying to survive that way, the

fight to be normal. I think my experiences allow me to feel that and have that sort of

chameleon vibe to not feel uncomfortable in a lot of places."

I don't think people like the guy who loves to crack jokes in the meeting, but

when I was pledging my fraternity, the older guys always said, "If you're doing

something, make it fun; and if you can make it fun, don't do it." I really can't say why,

but that just stuck, even to this day, I don't know. Recently though, I have been asking

the question, "What's next professionally?" I have been thinking about the type of role I

would like to play and more conscious of interactions I have with others and the types of

behaviors or traits that are more rewarded than others. I think a little more about that and

if I lose credibility if I continuously joke around or make levity of situations. I know we

are told there is a time and place for fun and that campus politics and decorum should

inform behavior, but that isn't always fun and so it's something I am a little more

cautious about.

Growing up, I like to say that I was raised on both sides of the tracks. My parents

were divorced and my dad was a little more affluent than my mom which led to two

different types of communities I would interact with. Whereas my father and stepmother

put me in a good position to succeed at private schools and things like that, my mother

still worked in the public school system. I got to see the whole perspective, I think, of an

African American upbringing. Where it would be one where people were trying to

succeed and middle class banding together and trying to have an "American Dream," but

another also with understanding the hustle and the struggles that people would go through. It made me empathetic to people from all walks of life.

I went to an all-boys prep High School and there were six other Black guys at the school with me, we all sat at the same table. That was fine, but we all lived a similar experience and came from a similar background so there wasn't a lot of diversity within our experiences. The college I attended, a small private Catholic institution in Alabama I chose more so for religious reasons than anything else. It had a total enrollment of about 700 students, so it was small and intimate. During the first few weeks of school, I found fraternity brothers and basically started hanging out with them all of the time, but I immediately found a home in the fraternity. And so you know, my racial identity never really came into play there, even though I was probably one of two black men in the fraternity, but it was just these guys. To me, these guys thought that I was funny. These guys thought that I was cool.

It really wasn't until I graduated from my master's program and started working at my previous institution that my racial identity came into play. It was almost like the students I advised didn't view me as being Black. I was in charge of these all white fraternities and I connected with them. For some of the students, it was the first time they had somebody that related to them and actually cared for them. However, for a lot of other students, especially students of color they were ostracizing and I felt on the outside. I think my race actually played a bit of a role with students who shared that same race with me of sensing almost like an outsider. That university was just so easily divided between this large population who were Greek and half of the school who

wasn't. So, it was two sides of the track again. A lot of times a majority of administrators who are African American are also members of NPHC organizations, so not having that connection, I think, was one that hindered me from building better relationships with minority students at my last institution.

I can think of a few times when a fraternity did something, but one time in particular was during homecoming, where students had spots for everyone's tent to set up. Someone had thrown the Black Student Union sign up in a tree. I was in a meeting with someone in Multicultural Affairs and representatives from the Black Student Union and one student stated, "It was probably the fraternities, it was probably those frat guys!" I responded saying, "We can't just say that because there's 1,100 of them. So, you can't just say that it was just one of them." One of the BSU students remarked, it was a young lady, "T. J., don't even chime in on this. You're one of them." I just walked out. What's been crazy is that I went to college in southern Alabama where, driving in from Houston, I saw a huge confederate flag flying on one of the hills with a big sign that said "donated by the sons of the confederacy." I felt more racially incensed after I left there and arrive in this city, then I did living in Alabama. I am more hyper-aware I am a Black man than there which could be problematic for some people here, but I do notice it more now and since working in student affairs, as opposed to when I was in college.

My overall life experience has given me the ability to interact with a lot of different people in a lot of different spaces. While I may not have had an exact same experience as someone else, I feel I have enough insight to where I can connect with everyone, at least enough experience that allow me to not feel uncomfortable in a lot of

108

places and having some stability. When I made the transition to my current institution, I was lucky it was in the same city and didn't have to uproot my family and start over.

I was talking to a mentor (white man) who had just started a new job in a new city and moved his family. I called him before school started as a sort of a check in, but he was telling me, "You always, no matter how happy you are, you always gotta keep looking." He was suggesting every month, just seeing what's out there which seemed odd to me. I found it a little hard to believe, because he just got finished telling me about how happy he was and how it was such a great move for him and his family. If that's the case, what mental muscle are you exercising by looking every month, or even just a quick glance, seeing what's happening? I struggle with this idea that people have to move out to move up. It's something I think about when I see fellow colleagues burning out, when I see fellow colleagues moving over to corporate work, or things like that. In today's day and age, we see things on social media, so we don't have any context behind it so we just see, someone starting a consulting business or thinking they couldn't hack it, they failed, or we don't even know because we haven't stayed in contact with some of these people, we're just conference friends. It's interesting, because I think we are chasing a blueprint and we don't really dive into asking what our level of satisfaction is or what our impact is. What do we keep thinking about is, if we're not maneuvering, then we're failing, but is that the case?

A lot of the blueprint structure really makes you have to question your own happiness, question your own satisfaction. If you're satisfied, if you feel like I'm happy at a place and another opportunity comes and somebody that you respect or another

colleague says, "No, no. You've got to go for that." It makes me question why, I feel

good and I feel content. Is content bad? Am I doing a disservice? So, that's the churning

and the debate. That's why I haven't reached out for any new position and why I'm even

skeptical in doing it altogether, because it's like why do I have to focus on sort of the

next thing if I feel like I am making an impact at the current thing? The term that just

keeps bouncing in my head because I was hearing it on a podcast is stillness. Still, it's a

relative term. Be still and work. You can be still and playing with your kid. It's almost

like a mindset type thing. It's understanding that you can be still and understand where

you are and be satisfied with that, because it helps for growth. If you have a better

understanding of where you are, then you have a better opportunity to grow to where

you want to be, but you have to take that time to be still.

Yvette

"I am acknowledging I've been raised with a lot of privileges as a Latina who has been

able to navigate some really white-ass spaces. But I also think that is likely why I'm able

to navigate spaces that might be difficult for other people that look like me, particularly

in a professional arena. But yet, I still think that I am not seen in the professional arena,

particularly at this campus, because of my culture. Because I'm Latina."

I think I was the most Latina of all the kids in my family. I was the one that hung

out with more Latinos in high school because I had more to hang out with. My sister is

the white girl of our family. She's in a white sorority. All of her friends are white. She

married a white man. She has the anglicized spelling of her name. All of that. My mother

spelled her name that way. My mother has this thing about aclarar la raza (lightening of

the race). My mother would always put esoterica on her face, which lightens your face. She was always very dark. My father is very, very, very white. He looks like an old classic Mexican movie star with the green eyes, the black mustache, and light skinned black hair. He's Puerto Rican but he just looks like a Mexican movie star. I am Brown. So people are going to look at me and judge me as a result of that, but I had privilege too.

I lived in a house my whole entire life. We always had a car. I went to dance school. I went to piano school. I went on family vacations. I got on planes. So I'm a Latina from New York, but usually put in a space where people think I was raised in the projects, that I grew up in the projects because of where I'm from. I would wear the hoop earrings. I had the Carhart jacket, or the long Gap jacket, or the polka dot Gap shirt that everybody was wearing and the baggy pants. I went to school in the city. I went to public school my entire life. But it was the best public high school. I had those experiences because of a decision my mother made the moment that my brother at about eight years old, had a knife pulled up on his neck in where they used to live. My mom said to my father, "Call your brother and get us an apartment. Call your brother because we're moving, we're not staying here anymore." So I've never had the experience that most people think I have had. That comes out in different spaces because I am able to navigate different spaces in this field in a different way because I can navigate different spaces. I can hide from that sometimes because people don't know how privileged I was.

Professionally, I was raised in this field. I was raised right in this field in how you're supposed to treat your staff and how you're supposed to do the work, and how

you're supposed to have integrity in the work and how you're supposed to balance your life and your work and your family and your work, and how family is more important than anything. I have never known to be any different because of how I've been raised in this field, and I think that's the only reason why I can deal with what I've had to deal with here. Supervising-wise, professionally, mentorship, relationships has not been anything like I've ever experienced before. I have not really had supervision or mentorship or guidance from my supervision line, from my leadership, since I got here. I think now I feel a little bit more that I will likely get a little bit more development from a current supervisor and now that he's in the role and not an intern in the role. And he's sitting in it and he's feeling more comfortable. Because I think as much of an ego that he has, he still believes and wants to develop staff and he wants them to be successful.

My first two years here I felt it was very toxic. I don't know if I feel it's less toxic because I've just gotten used to it and not that it's any real less toxic, I just maybe more used to it. This is my seventh year here. It is not a campus that has a culture of care. By toxic, I mean the institution doesn't treat their people right. There's this competitive nature and if you get sucked into it, you're not kind to people. You could become very siloed, and it's a negative silo. People weren't really collaborative. My first year here, no one took me to lunch. None of my peers took me to lunch. None of my peers asked to take me to lunch. Any meeting I had with a peer was because I created the meeting and I asked to have a meeting with them. Even someone who I knew, the assistant director of multicultural affairs, our first lunch together was four years into my tenure. She finally said, "We should do lunch." After, she goes, "Yvette, we've never done this! Why

haven't we done this before?" I'm thinking in my head, "Girl, because you never asked and you should've been the first one to invite me to lunch when I got here!" That's what I mean by toxic. I was not welcomed here. I cried a lot my first year here. I didn't feel welcomed at all. So, I have shifted that to make sure that people who have come after me feel welcomed. I take them out, I set up a lunch to bring people in and meet with people and I've worked hard to create those relationships with my peers that I didn't have before. Now I feel like I have directors and my coworkers on my level that I can jive with now, but I'm talking it took five, six years before that even happened. However, there are still other staff members here that look like me who don't have the network of people that I have built.

I pulled a coordinator the other day from another department because I realized that the associate director they reported to has been gone since July. And I'm thinking, "Hold up, hold on a second, that kid is doing all the hard work, and I bet you any amount of money, no one's talked to this kid about a special pay increase (SPI), and trying to get him compensated for all this extra work he's doing." He is young, Latino male. So I pulled him aside one day, last week, and I was like, "Come here for a second. I want to ask you something and I'm going to trust you right now. So this is between you and me. Has anybody said the word SPI to you?" And he was like, "What is that?" And I was like, "All right, you and I are going to do lunch this week. I need you to send me your job description. I need you to not tell anybody else I'm asking you for this." And he looked at me, he was like, "I know where you're going and I thank you for that." And on Monday he got a full page printed, documentation of all the extra additional

113

responsibilities, the definition of SPI, the different ways in which he can ask for it. All of that. And he left my office on Monday, when I gave him a sheet, and he said, "Can I hug you?" And I said, "Absolutely." And he was like, "Yvette, I can't tell you how much this means to me because I've been ..." What was interesting is, he had a running list that he had started of all the extra duties that he's been doing, but no one, no one has thought to talk to him about that. And he's been doing this since July. It is October. So you're going to just ... Come on. People could care less. People could care less about the value of their staff. So that's the toxicity that I'm talking about.

The whole devaluing or lack of valuing staff is what I've seen, unless you perform. Lately, last few years, it's been all about metrics and all about preeminence. Those metrics and preeminence, if you can't quantify your shit, you're not going to be rewarded... that's just what it is. So you've got to be able to quantify that, and if you're not quantifying it, the people who are going to be placed up on the podium know how to do that really well, but I couldn't tell you what they did in their office every day. In some ways, it creates a competition, but also there is the sponsorship piece. That sponsorship shit is real here. People are getting pulled up into positions they're not ready for. But if you know somebody and you let them in, and you're that person's person and you're getting sponsored, you're getting sponsored here. So, I'm not going to the bar and I'm not going to gym. I'm not going to do that with the big boss. So I'm not one of her besties. And so I'm the one that's not the assistant dean, because so far two of her besties have become assistant deans. That's a problem.

The team I have been able to build here, that I supervise and lead, is great. I have a really good relationship with the team. I can trust the team. We talk about stuff. I share things that I shouldn't. I remind them constantly, I'm like, "What's said in here stays in here, because you all know I tell you things that I'm not supposed to tell you. I tell you things before anybody else tells anybody else. I trust you and I need you to understand where I'm coming from. I need you to understand what's happening around us and what we need to play into and what we don't." I'm very particular about the gossip stuff. The staff knows, don't even mess with it, get out of it, stay away from it. So, we just have a really good relationship. There's trust. That's not to say that there's not issues or that I haven't had to deal with some personal pieces or supervisor to supervisee issues, coaching staff to address their supervisor on something that they have issue with. All of that. But it's about creating the space where anything is on the table including things that they need to tell me about myself, especially things that they need to tell me about myself is on the table.

I do fun-on-ones with everybody on staff where other people [staff from other areas] are like, "Oh, fun-on-one, what's that? I want a fun-on-one. Fun-on-ones." I tell people at conferences, I'm like, "Yeah, I do fun-on-ones with staff." They're like, "Fun-on-ones? What is that?" I'm like, "It's a fun-on-one. It's not a one-on-one because I don't supervise them, it's a fun-on-one." So you just talk about anything. I have instituted that. I've done that for years. It's just something I do, because I need to understand who's coming to work for me and what they're bringing with them and who they are, so that I know what's going to make them tick, what's going to make them happy and keep them

115

happy. If I understand who they are, I'm going to understand better what might make them happy. I'm very familial and relational. So for me, my family is important. They know, something happens, I'm out. If something happens to them, I need them to know that they need to get the hell out because I'm going to kick them out, and they need to go home. They need to do whatever they need to do, but that's also how I've been raised in this field prior to here. Prior to here.

I share with my team sometimes the honest truth that, "Sometimes I've learned more about what not to do here than I have about what to do." I came here knowing what to do, that's why I was hired. I learned a lot about what not to do moving forward in my career. That's not a bad thing, it just is. So I think my role is to help process those things. I also then get tired because I have to do a lot of translating. And that's tiring. I have to translate behavior of people above, because my staff is going to be open enough in our staff meeting to say, "Yvette, why did this happen? Can you help us? Can you explain this to us because we just don't understand?" They have the space where they know they can ask those questions. I'm not going to judge them. We can have those conversations knowing that we're not talking about people, they're literally trying to understand, and so I have to help translate this person and their actions to the team because they just like, "Really? What the hell was that?" So it's tiring.

Summary

This chapter presented demographic information of the participants interviewed for this study. I provided a brief introduction of each of the seven participants, their background information, and current professional role. I then discussed my construction

116

of the individual participant narratives before presenting the individual narratives of the seven participants: Gabriel, Jackson-Evans, Jackie, Jesús, Lauren, T.J., and Yvette. The following chapter provides additional findings building from the narratives presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

The participant narratives presented in Chapter Four provided a foundation for this chapter by foregrounding participants' nuanced experiences as they described their personal and professional backgrounds. Their narratives highlight issues at the intersection of positional hierarchy, race, and other social identities within student affairs administrative work. This chapter provides a more thorough analysis of participants' experiences and draws connections across narratives as they relate to the research questions of this study. The findings presented provide further direction and guidance for discussion and implications of this study explored in the following chapter.

During the first interview, participants were invited to describe their professional journey to their current position as a mid-level administrator in student affairs. They were given wide latitude to discuss how they entered the student affairs field including formative experiences, roles of mentors, and navigation of their professional careers. Participants' stories were consistent with their first introduction to student affairs as a career, often resulting from their involvement in student organizations, campus activities, or serving in leadership roles. Additionally, participants also shared how their involvement also led to developing relationships with student affairs administrators who further share the possibility of the student affairs profession or encouraged participants to apply to student affairs graduate programs. In addition to these experiences, the

majority of participants also shared important supervisors, mentors, and trusted friends that guided their educational and continued to guide their professional journeys.

In the second and third interviews, participants were asked to share their daily experiences as mid-level administrators in student affairs which included describing both supportive and negative interactions with their reporting supervisors, university leadership, supervisees, and students. Participants were asked to share experiences with racism or perceived bias. They shared the complexities of working across hierarchical lines of the student affairs organizational chart while balancing professional responsibilities, and conscious of how their varying identities show up and influence relationships in their professional and personal lives. Participants also shared how they develop relationships and interact with their own respective staff reports and fellow colleagues at their institutions. Further, participants articulated the impact of the local communities in which they live and the availability of local amenities, or lack thereof, on the perceptions of their experiences.

I begin with a description of the different ways racism is experienced throughout participants' work interactions and the impact on their work. I then discuss the navigation strategies participants illustrated in dealing with racism and the complexities of their mid-level administrative roles. I then explore the influences of the local community and social outlets described by the participants. Finally, I end with a description of how participants saw the ways racism is upheld across hierarchical and racial lines of power structures and their expectations of responsibility for student affairs leaders and the field.

Interactions Across Student Affairs and Institution

Participants described their interactions with supervisors, supervisees, students, and colleagues as highly political and difficult to navigate at times. They explained how they will regularly shift how information is shared among different constituents across the vertical hierarchy within student affairs and across varying racial and ethnic identities depending on space.

Interactions Across Hierarchy

Each participant described their regular interactions with colleagues across the vertical hierarchy of their respective institution. Particularly, participants illustrated how they daily navigate conversations, emails, and other forms of communication with their supervisors, supervisees, and other colleagues. For example, Gabriel described how his partner has called attention to his "multiple voices" by stating,

> My partner jokes with me all the time that when I have four or five different voices that I have. One is when I'm talking with my supervisors. One is when I'm talking to colleagues. One is when I'm talking to friends. One is when I'm talking to the family. She [my partner] will look at it and be like, "what are you saying? Where did that even come from?"...It's interesting because I think at this point, I've gotten so used to it that it does come second nature. I've had to do it growing up. I've had to do it in a lot of different roles.

In an earlier interview, Gabriel explained how he feels "different people need different things," but has also been accused from colleagues and personal relationships of being "two-faced" and "not being true" to himself.

I don't know if it's just because of my, I don't want to say ability, but my skill set that I've learned throughout the years to adapt to conversations, to leadership styles, to supervising styles, and even to adapt to, I don't want to say get what I want, but make sure that I play within the, I guess, the arena that has been set up for me in order for me to not be at the forefront of someone's cross-hairs… But I would say that I probably benefited from them [ability to code-switch] more often than not and I'm not sure if that's because of who I am as a person, right? Or who I am as what my identities kind of put out there.

After reflecting on the first interview he mentioned how the constant navigation of needs and conversations is "exhausting because I'm more tired here than I had been in my other positions. It's not necessarily the workload, but it's more so mental capacity of needing to be more I think than what is expected in order to break down some of those walls or some of those pieces that could be there." Gabriel highlights an example of feeling rewarded for his ability to code-switch and navigate different constituents and conforming to the expectations others may have of his behavior, use of language, or appropriateness for a particular interaction. For example, he shared times where he felt given a pass or ability to explain a decision further where colleagues of other minoritized backgrounds were not given the same luxury. However, other participants described their role as translators of information from senior administrators to the supervisees of participants.

Yvette described how she views her role as a type of organizational translator to her staff regarding decisions being made at senior level of the student affairs division.

She shared the questions she fields from her staff trying to understand why decisions are being made, but also the mental labor she spends navigating those conversations.

> I came here knowing what to do, that's why I was hired. I learned a lot about what not to do moving forward in my career. That's not a bad thing, it just is…I have to do a lot of translating. And that's tiring. I have to translate behavior of people above, because they [staff] are going to be open enough in a staff meeting to say, "[Yvette], why did this happen? Can you help us? Can you explain this to us because we just don't understand?" And they'll have the space that they know they can ask that question, I'm not going to judge them. And we can have that conversation knowing that we're not talking about people, they're literally trying to understand, and so I have to help translate this person and their actions to the team because they just like, "Really? What the hell was that?" So it's tiring.

Yvette continued to explain the emotional labor required to consistently sustain the energy for her staff and a lack of emotional support from other colleagues and supervisors at her institution. In her role, Yvette serves as an "organizational translator" (Barner, 2011, p.40) where her explanations to her staff may result in adoption or buy-in to organizational decisions. Other participants also shared how they view their role in passing along information between organizational levels, Jackson-Evans however, discussed the difficulty of navigating between multiple levels of the organization and not being able to be present as much as he desired for his staff.

Jackson-Evans serves as the leader of a departmental unit supervising six staff members, but his responsibilities regularly pulls him beyond his department to deal with

larger issues that arise. The time spent out of his department and away from his staff has made it difficult for Jackson-Evans to feel a full member of the department he leads.

> I have had instances and moments where I will come in and I need to troubleshoot something for my staff. I've had other moments where I've come in, and I've not seen my staff, will not have seen my staff for the whole day, because I've been pulled to the provost office, or to the vice provost office or to Student Conduct or legal counsel or to marketing and communications, craft some type of statement for something. My staff knows that the difficulty for me that that creates is that they're oftentimes moving forward together, and I feel off on an island. I oftentimes don't feel a part of this team, and I lead the team.

He continued,

> I can't get a grasp on one thing, because five other big are falling out of the sky that I have to catch. But then I also feel like I'm making excuses. So there's that. That dissonance, that dissonance that I have, in that I know that I know what I'm doing. I know that I'm a kick ass professional. But, then I second guess myself all the time, I'm second guessing myself here. So it takes imposter syndrome to another level. So a lot of my day to day is also me trying to find my time where I fit. I really don't feel like I fit here with my team, because I'm so much up here and trying not to get down here and their business, because they're professionals but not also, I don't know it's weird.

Jackson-Evans stated it makes him "feel inadequate" knowing he should be devoting more attention to the needs of his staff and students yet, his time is often directed toward

heavy administrative work and away from the people he feels need him the most. Even

though he does his best to convey the expectations of senior administration to his staff,

he stated,

> But then I also feel like a lot of times the staff does not get what the upper level
>
> pressures really are and so they don't necessarily understand why we have to do
>
> certain things a certain way… I'm the politician, I shake the hands and I kiss the
>
> babies. When shit hits the fan, I handle it.

In this example, he illustrates the difficulty newer student affairs professionals have with

understanding the pervasive role of institutional politics (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008),

but also the responsibility of handling the political/organizational issues that do arise.

Jackson-Evans also discussed a compounding factor of feeling little agency when

senior-administration provides directives to what should occur within fraternity and

sorority life on campus. As the director of the fraternity and sorority community,

Jackson-Evans reported how he rarely is asked to engage in conversations impacting the

community. Instead, conversations are convened only within senior-administrative staff.

He said,

> I have the Board of Trustees telling me, telling him, telling the Associate Vice
>
> Provost, what they think should happen with sorority and fraternity life. Even
>
> down to where they think we should be housed as an office. When it's time to
>
> talk about sorority and fraternity life, I don't get to talk. They don't ask me. They
>
> ask him [Associate Vice Provost]. So the sense of ownership…so I have this

disconnect across the board. I show up and I help get stuff done. But I have no
agency.

He provided the example,

> In October, I set out on the exercise of creating a mission and vision statement,
> because we didn't have one because we were a new department. I was told by the
> Chief of Staff of the vice provost that our mission and vision statement will be
> whatever the Greek Task Force tells us. It is not one that we make up on our
> own. I've been told in different ways what direction we're moving in and how
> fast we need to move in this direction, what my priorities are, or priorities should
> be. It's all tied into what the great task force and the provost wants.

The expectation to "tow the line" is further complicated by the perception of having to
maintain the prestige of the institution and "be a good little soldier."

> I think that, especially in roles such as those, it's almost like you are expected to
> surrender your identity for the sake of the professional role that you all play. And
> you should be devoid of opinion, you should be devoid of your own thought
> process, you should be devoid of all of these things if they just so happen to be
> against the direction or the thought process of the administration.

This comment also supports existing research on how mid-level student affairs
administrators often feel isolated between entry-level professionals and senior-level
administrators (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007). Jackson-Evans' desire to be more present
and supportive of his students and staff stand in stark contrast to the relative autocratic

125

style of leadership perceived of the senior-administration, with less input and ownership by Jackson-Evans as a mid-level administrator.

Participants also noted experiencing little in the way of receiving formal training or support from their supervisors or colleagues on campus. The lack of support seemed more pronounced among participants who were younger or newer to their respective positions or institutions. Jesús, for example, has been in his position for just over two years. Although he has been at the institution for some time, he stated he received little guidance when he became the director of his department.

> I don't think anybody has ever like, "this is what needs to happen." Like, I don't think first of all, I don't think we have a very good, like, training program for us directors, per se. So I would say, in a new role like this, like no one was like, "Oh, this is what you need to do. This is what you need to do." I think the only training I got when I became a director, or even an interim director, was like, how to use our computer system program for directors like how to check your budgets and like a couple other things like that, like websites, so now you have access to this. And more recently, our conduct system.

Jesús echoes sentiments in earlier research on the lack of preparation mid-level student affairs administrators receive (Mather, Bryan, & Faulkner, 2009). When asked if he could further discuss any challenges or obstacles he faced in his role, he continued,

> I think there's a lot, there has been a lot of those [challenges], "I didn't know kind of moments." I didn't know either I was supposed to be doing that, or, oh, this is a thing that you were supposed to have, or this happens every other year and so

there is has been some of those areas. And I have, I have experienced several

obstacles, I mean, being much younger and not having, at the beginning, not

having a lot of professional supervision, I found myself researching how to

supervise people, and reading some books and asking my colleagues and friends

from other institutions that were in a similar role. I felt a little bit more

comfortable getting with new directors that started at the university and like,

'Hey, you know, we're both kind of new, so how can we help each other

transition? What's your style of supervising? And what do you believe?' And so,

I think because I worked here before in this same area, I think that maybe

individuals just assumed that I knew things and assumed that I knew it when a lot

of times I didn't. And I had to point it out several times. I'm like, "I have no idea

what you're talking about. I've never experienced that." Just things like that have

happened.

Jesús further described how in meetings he feels shutout of conversations or an inability

to offer his input because of his younger age. When asked if he could describe if he felt

any type of treatment from a supervisor that was biased because of his identities, Jesús

responded,

I would say I have. I don't know, because I was young, or because I am younger

than a lot of other directors, but it's like 'oh, I'll explain it to you later.' 'This is

just what we're doing.' Or 'Oh, well [Jesús] can take care of it.' And when I think

age wise has been one of those but, not necessarily a biased situation but, I don't

even know what to describe it. It's just some sort of way.

In this description, Jesús does not directly point to an overt act of discrimination because of his age or because of his ethnicity. However, his willingness to speak up and question program decisions or direction of the organization was met with condescending treatment from supervisors and older colleagues expecting him to just accept a direction or a decision. The response he received smothered any attempt for Jesús to effectively question organizational direction. Further, this type of patronizing behavior reinforces who has the ability to engage in organizational discussions and be taken seriously; the treatment affects feelings of safety and discourages individuals from speaking up (Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison, Wheeler-Smith, & Kamdar, 2011). In other words, voices become silenced.

Gabriel echoed similar sentiments about how his age shows up in interactions with his supervisors or around other director colleagues. He particularly discussed the mental pressure of having to juggle his thoughts before interactions with supervisors and among other director colleagues to be received as competent by others. He stated,

Because for me I'm the youngest still whether that's age and experience at the senior table, right? Other people have been here 20 years, 15 years, 25 years, 12 years. So for me, a lot of that of bringing things up and why I feel like I need to hold back sometimes is because I always wonder, "Are my colleagues sitting around this table going to think, 'Well, this is a new kid,' or, 'He's young. He still has a lot of stuff that he thinks that we can do,' So I think that that's a big dynamic of it as well is who else is around that table and what perceptions do they kind of see? Is it because of my age? Or is it because of my experience? Or

128

is it because of a race or ethnicity or where I grew up? So I think a lot of those

things, there's probably not a day that goes by that I don't step into a meeting and

think to myself, "How can I arrange my thoughts in this conversation in order to

make it the most productive?" Right?

Gabriel drew attention to how the intersection of his age and race impact the meetings.

Being the first director of color to lead the housing office at his office weighs heavily on

his desire to be seen as competent. Yet, when he speaks or brings up topics that often

may not be thought of from the perspectives of his other colleagues, he also fears being

tasked with extra work that may go unrewarded.

But I think, and for me, it's trying to determine, right, if I want to... It's tough

because then do I give those things up and say, "Never mind"? Right? But then

all of a sudden, that's from other points of view that's like, "Oh, well, he couldn't

handle that so we won't give him anything else," or is it you just hunker down

and tackle it and then all the other pieces?

The examples of Jesús and Gabriel particularly illustrate the multiple ways racism and

discrimination can be experienced with individuals across multiple identities. They

highlight the difficulty of balancing their younger age, compared to their colleagues, and

their minoritized identities when interacting with individuals at their institution.

Segmenting their experiences as either related to age or to racial identity would risk

social categorization and influence how their experiences are understood (Dovidio &

Gaertner, 2004).

129

Participants also highlighted their experiences navigating a predominantly white environment. Particularly, most participants illuminated the challenges of often being one of the few, if not the only person of color in student affairs leadership. They also discussed the mental gymnastics that take place cultivating relationships with their white supervisors and supervisees. Lauren spoke about a situation with a former supervisee who desired much more emotional support and wanted a style of leadership Lauren was not comfortable with, nor felt she had to provide to her supervisees. As Lauren described, "She and I did not have a fantastic relationship because of I think she was the epitome of like, white guilt, and white privilege and white fragility and white tears." The supervisee would cry a lot when speaking to Lauren and began going to Lauren's supervisors and crying to them about not feeling supported. Lauren then discussed how she was forced to support her own leadership style and felt as if the white woman's word was taken as valid and never including or asking Lauren for her interpretations. Lauren continued to share the extra work she put into educating her supervisors about the weaponization of tears deployed by white women (Accapadi, 2007) and how Lauren felt not supported or heard over the voices of other white colleagues.

> Eventually, I printed up probably 10 articles and resources for them [supervisors] about white guilt, and about white fragility, and white tears. And I said, "I need both of you to read these. And then we'll have a meeting." And my boss read them and was like, "I did not know that this was a thing. I didn't know these concepts existed." And then I proceeded to basically go over multiple examples

130

of white women in our workplace who exemplify what is in these articles. And

he was like, "you're correct. This is what I hear. This is what they told me, this is

what they do." And I was like, "Yes." I said, "nine times out of 10, who they're

upset with are people of color." I said, "at the end the day, neither one of you

white men, neither one of you came and said anything to me. You let this young

white woman come in here and cry to you and let her stay her case. And the

person who's been here the longest, that's been working with you the longest that

you see the most every day that's been producing for you. None of you said

anything. And so how am I supposed to take that?"

Lauren continued the mental labor she is forced to consider when managing

relationships with others, "I have to be aware that I am triggering emotions." She also

added the questions that are raised, seeding self-doubt about her conversations with

others, "I don't understand what the problem is and I do try to check myself to say like,

oh, gosh, am I being too harsh?"

Aside from navigating relationships with her white colleagues, Lauren also spoke

about the extra burden and responsibility of supporting relationships with other

colleagues and students of color at her institution. For example, when asked if she ever

felt the need to mask emotions when a student of color is having a conversation with her,

Lauren responded,

Absolutely. They're dealing with enough as it is. I think like most campuses, our

mental health is not great here. It's terrible… I don't want them to worry about

me, that's not what this is. I want them to take care of themselves. Yeah, you

131

have sort of, you know, buck up and smile and say like, everything's good, you

know what I mean? And then you figure out how to offload that and another

way, and whether it is with a colleague, or you go off campus and do whatever

you need to do. And you have to find this coping mechanisms for yourself. And

I'm, I think that I'm good at that. But for our younger professionals, we try to get

them to go home and figure out some other healthy things to do.

Lauren also discussed the role she has recently taken on supervising one of her program

coordinators, an African American woman, who originally was working in another

office on campus working with first-generation students but whose office slowly

dissolved and Lauren inherited her as a supervisee.

So now she works in my office. She's a lovely human, she is carrying the

students that she knows she cares deeply about. She's passionate about higher

education. She's incredibly funny. Like, it's ridiculous how funny she is. She's a

great worker. She is like, [this institution] is a horrible place, and I don't care. But

she's like, I'm not leaving [this city], my husband works here, and so I'm

here…So my job now is to try to help [African American Program Coordinator]

feel good about being at [this institution], and feel like what the gifts that she has

to offer, which are many, are needed here, and that they matter here, and that

they're respected here. So I am her supervisor. And I also feel a bit responsible to

her as another woman of color to help her really develop a sense of being able to

thrive in this environment and in higher ed, and also helping to get her to dream

beyond her immediate circumstances… And it stresses me out a little bit, because

132

I don't want to mess this up. Because she's been, she hasn't been treated well by

everyone else. Not that people are like mean to her, like she definitely has friends

and stuff. But as far as like professionally, no one's here for her.

When asked if Lauren also feels the need to mask her emotions with her program

coordinator, she responded with "I don't withhold as much." However, Lauren continued

to speak about the responsibility she takes on to process experiences with her program

coordinator on a deeper level.

What I will say about her is that she is also very observant, and so we really sort

of talked through more about what those observations mean, about what she's

seen and what she's heard. So she's seen a lot and heard a lot and now she needs

someone to process those things with. My job is to create, you know, a treehouse

of trust so that she can come in here and say, "Well, I heard this or I saw that."

I'm like, "Whoa, okay, so let's talk about that, and let's talk about who those

people are, and let's work through that, and also not let that infest you in such a

negative way that it keeps you from wanting to do great work." Because the end

the day, she has a huge heart for these students, like a huge heart, and our

students need her heart. Our first gen students and our transfer students certainly

need it. But they took 99% of that work away from her and I think I know that

she felt like that was the only niche that she could fill here. Now it's kind of

gone, so now we have to refill that bucket. So I don't hide, but we do go deeper

to think through them more. I have to I have to develop an understanding of what

she's thinking and have a better conversation so that I can try to remedy it as much as I possibly can.

Another way extra labor is placed upon some participants is performing extra tasks for their institution. Jesús is the youngest and the only Hispanic male on campus who is serving as a director of a department. He spoke to the need to have a much greater representation of Latinx professionals in administrative roles due to the institution's desire to become a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), but also to better represent the diversity of the existing student population stating, "I can't be the only person." Also fluent in Spanish, Jesús shared a number of occasions where he is called upon to assist other administrative departments translating documents and serving as a translator between university professionals and students' families when filling out applications or financial aid forms. He said,

> When it comes to translating or helping individuals with [forms], these are not things that you learned growing up in my language. So I have had to take an extra step and finding out how to translate words, higher education, words, academic words, that a parent from Mexico will understand. A parent from Puerto Rico understands.

Jesús continued to speak about other times where he would regularly be sought out for his language skills or serve as "the Hispanic male representative for the entire campus" which causes a lot of extra time to process requests and sort through. Being the sole representation for the Latinx community on campus has made Jesús extremely visible when others on campus need him. However, Jesús also shared where he feels invisible to

others and the perception held by many whites that all minoritized people look alike

(Rivera, Forquer, & Rangel, 2010). He specifically shared instances where he would

regularly be confused for another Latino man working in another department on campus.

> [Carlos] was another person in residence life, also in Student Affairs. I guess they
> would they would be considered microaggressions, but after multiple encounters,
> I was like man they need to get it together…Like confusing each other. I've
> experienced multiple microaggressions. To this extent, now, I feel like they're not
> macro they're just racist! I would get, and still get called [Carlos]. He's only been
> gone for four weeks, three weeks now, but emails for [Carlos], campus mail for
> [Carlos], staff just referring to me in meetings as [Carlos]… But after a while, it
> got kind of crazy when I started getting emails about police reports for the
> housing apartments for people on call… I've been here for five years.

Jesús continued to state, "I try to wear my name tag. Because not only myself, it [being

confused for other] happens to most of the people of color in our area." For example,

Jesús supervises a Latina woman and has a wife, also Latina, who works on campus.

> Actually, this morning, the Panhellenic president asked me isn't [my supervisee]
> in charge of the Residence Life and housing reservations? And I said, "No, that's
> housing. And, that's [my wife]." She goes, "Oh, yeah, your wife. I thought that
> just until last week, I thought you were married to [your supervisee]." And I
> [said], "Sit down, please" and just kind of grilled into her… So [my supervisee],
> myself, and [my wife], every time we are together during a student organization
> fair or a student services fair we feel the need to have our nametags on all the

135

time just [so] people [don't] get us confused. And still, people have confused us

even when I'm wearing my nametag. I left mine at home today, but one of the

things that we usually do the first three weeks of school, we just have our

nametag, so people can remember names and so we won't get that confusion.

That affects how I do my work because if people don't know who I am, I might

be presented with a different question. I get asked housing questions from

students a lot. So having my nametag that says [my department], helps.

Gabriel, similarly spoke to being the only Asian student affairs staff member at

his institution working outside of IT.

I've seen quite a few times...There's always that frequency of notion of like,

"Well, you're an Asian, so you should be good with technology and all these

kinds of things." It's always like, "can you figure out how to work the TV or the

projector or those kinds of things?" I was like, "Well, we have IT staff. Can we

bring them in and then do that?"

Gabriel also shared how he will regularly walk around campus with his coffee cup

visiting various offices and speaking to other professionals to help build relationships

and understand other needs across the university. When asked if part of his motivation to

walk around and build relationships also stems from a desire to humanize himself more,

Gabriel responded,

Oh yeah. Yeah. I think so because, and partly because one, I'm new here

relatively, I think being here two and a half years I've been able to meet almost

everyone on campus. And so really. And it's a smaller institution, so I'm able to

do that. But I think that whole aspect of because there is not a large Asian

population here, and if they are here, a majority of them are international students

or are not local. So for me it's almost demystifying a lot of assumptions that

individuals have just by seeing me around campus, by seeing me take part in

conversations, by seeing me engage people. I think subconsciously I do some of

that….And for me it's subconsciously thinking about, well, we're more than that

[work in IT or good with technology] and I want to make sure that people

understand that. When I engage in these conversations or when you see me, it's

more than just that; I have other things to offer. I think when thinking about my

future projections of where I want to be and what I want to do is making sure that

people understand that there are different layers of me that they may not

understand or expect and it's really about peeling those pieces back and make

sure they see it.

Beyond the university and navigating the institutional setting, Gabriel also added how he

feels a similar effort of building relationship and breaking stereotypical barriers also

occurs within the local community where the university is located.

Playing the Game and Knowing the Arena: Navigation and Coping Strategies

The stories of multiple participants brought up a concept of "playing the game"

or "knowing the arena that you're in" to describe the ways in which they approach their

work and interactions with other people. Although not an explicit understanding of how

participants were impacted by their work environments, they made observations of

interactions with others and pointed out behaviors they have adopted at work. For

example, these behaviors participants have adopted over time by observing behaviors that are deemed "acceptable," knowing what gets rewarded, or seeing that rules and expectations are applied to different people.

Don't Scare the White People

Jackie was perhaps the most explicit in articulating the behaviors she has adopted from listening to former mentors and understanding what types of actions are more or less rewarded. Having previously shared that she was mentored from early in her career by mostly white women and white straight men, Jackie mentioned that she tries now to model the way for other Black professionals of "how to be Black in white spaces." When asked how she learned those behaviors, Jackie chuckled stating, "I don't know. Through osmosis. I've made some mistakes. I don't know if I really learned from somebody, I think it just been like trial by error." She continued discussing her comprehension of her Black identity within her work environment.

> Really, like really just trial by fire and testing waters and be like, how Black can I be in this space? You know, even like scanning the room was in the room? How much can they take? Whatever. And there have been some definitely speed bumps along the way… that's a constant question that I asked. I don't even know if I learned it from anyone. I don't, I just didn't have any of those role models. And a lot of the Black people I've worked with over the years have been subordinates of mine, not peers or above me.

When asked to reflect on her role models and her mostly white mentors over the years, I asked if she thought it was fair to state that she was "socialized to perform whiteness." Jackie replied,

> I think that is fair. And as I stayed in the field, my longevity I've folded in who I
> am as a Black woman into it. I used to say all the time I play the game to win, I
> play the game to win. And I'm really good at winning. But that means like, I
> know how to play in the space. Like I learned the game and I played the game,
> right? And I learned the game by watching [my white woman mentor] and
> whatever and now I play to win by adding this assertive Black woman that comes
> with it…. So once I felt like I was the [my white woman mentor] at whatever
> school I was, then I got to be like, Black on top of that. Yeah, and so but you
> gotta learn that you got to play the game first. You can't just come in and be like,
> here I am.

Jackie's explanation performing whiteness supports previous research on racially minoritized student affairs professionals and the embodied racism and negotiations that take place within the workplace. For example, Nguyen and Duran (2018) stated, "For people of color, the need to fit into the white mold of professionalism often determines their ability to obtain and keep their jobs" (p. 116). However, as illustrated in Jackie's individual narrative, she is fully aware of the manifestation of whiteness within her professional behavior and has made the conscious decision not to risk professional consequences for speaking out or disrupting the "norms" of her institution.

139

Jackie continued her explanation of how she understands "the game" and shares how she also instills this understanding within the Black students she advises.

> The game is what I tell my NPHC students. There's one rule do not scare the white people. Rule number two, refer back to rule number one. Do not scare the white people. If you don't scare the white people you can do whatever the hell you want. The second you scare them shit is going down…. My Ques (an NPHC fraternity) decided that a couple years ago that they were going to chant in the Union at midnight. Fine. 'But your chant was loaded with misogyny and sexual gratification. Guess who got an email?' The Chancellor from a good Christian white couple who's sitting in the Union enjoying their time…First thing I said, "what's my number one rule?" "Don't scare white people!" "What do you think you did?" "We scared the white people." "You sure did!" And I think the game is not to scare white people.

Jackie shared her thoughts about how she feels the "rules to the game" impact other areas of her professional role.

> So everyone thinks [Jackie] is their friend, everyone. Oh, we love her. She's funny. Like, everyone think I'm their friend. I'm like you, you are an ally and/or pawn in the game that I'm playing. So if I make you feel comfortable and welcome and jovial. Fantastic. Because when I need something or I need you have my back, you're going you're going to do it and you're going to do it willingly. Because there's a relationship here. That's the game. I make people comfortable. I make white people comfortable. I'm one of those Black people. I

should have her over for dinner. I'm totally one of those people. And I know that

and some people will be like, it's like tokenism. It's not. It's survival, no one says

no to me.

In this instance, Jackie shared how she has learned to navigate predominantly white

spaces by understanding what white people in different spaces will be comfortable with

tolerating. As Jackie has progressed through her professional career and established

credibility at her current institution, she has felt more comfortable revealing some parts

of herself. However, she does hold two identities that are distinctly separate from each

other stressing, "That is professional protection, because the world judges you, and the

world will see you and they will make their own interpretations of you." Jackie

recognizes the duality to her professional and personal lives and the pressures to

conform to white norms and expectations within the workplace.

Lauren discussed having to negotiate how assertive and direct she can be without

suffering professional repercussions. In private, Lauren's supervisor will encourage her

to voice her opinion and feel empowered to question approaches to programs and

policies. However, if Lauren does voice dissention or offers her opinions in meetings,

she becomes chastised.

[Our Dean of Students], knows that I always have an opinion and he knows that

at the end of the day, I'm going to be pretty direct about it. And, we were in a

meeting about our reorganization and he was like, "do you have any questions?"

And I said, "You know what, I'm just going to keep it real plain and I have some

questions to ask." And he was like, "I appreciate your directness. I want you to

keep doing that." And I'm like, "ookayyy, so you told me that you want me to

keep doing that. So don't put any boundaries around that, because I'm going to do

that when we're together and I'm going to do that when we're out on the street.

Like, if this is what you want me to do, I'm going to do it. And there are not

many repercussions of me doing it." And, and so I have to make a decision to

trust that or not trust that. I have to call an audible. It's a constant football game.

And I have to call an audible as to whether it's I'm just going to go for it or not.

Because of the end the day I could experience professional repercussions.

Because I was direct and he didn't feel like that was the right time, even though

he told me I need to be that person. And so, you know, that's a hard thing that I

don't think any of my white colleagues have to wrestle with. They can say what

they want to say and they're going to be gainfully employed, and they won't

experience any repercussions. Not so much myself.

Lauren also expanded on having to question her approaches to conversations or pay

careful attention to how she is being received by other white colleagues at her institution.

She stated,

So I deal with a lot of just white people crying at work. And, and it is, it's not

shocking anymore. It's just kind of disgusting. Because I'm like, I don't

understand what the problem is. And I do try to check myself to say like, oh,

gosh, am I being too harsh? Because I know that I can be, I was raised to be a

fighter. So that's what I was raised by a single mother in a very rough

environment. I have an older brother. So like, Yes, I will drop you in the street if

142

need be. So I know that's a part of me. But what I really reflect on that, I'm like, No, I'm just being clear. I'm just being clear and honest. I'm not beating around the bush, which is what we do in our environment all the time. And so No, I don't think I was being mean, I was just telling the truth. And nothing that I said was personal. It was really about behavior, because that's how you give people feedback. Yes? Okay. So now I'm at a point where I'm like, I don't really care anymore. You crying is not my fault. But I had to build that up over time.

Having to consider the feelings and reactions of whites means that Lauren cannot be honest about what she is experiencing or feelings. The discomfort whites experience when receiving assertive feedback from a Black woman outweighs the importance of understanding her viewpoints and thoughts unless they are packaged in a way to not hurt the feelings of others.

The situation described by Lauren further illuminates the workplace negotiations placed on racially minoritized professionals in determining the safety of expressing themselves and how behavior will be received by whites (Nguyen & Duran, 2018). For example, Lauren does not get the luxury of responding in an assertive way to her white supervisee because of the social stereotypes associated with assertive Black women as being aggressive, angry, and demanding (Carbado & Gulati, 2013; Collins, 2002). However, beyond the controlling images of Black women (Collins, 2002), is the insidious deployment of such stereotypes by whites to absolve themselves of having to interrogate their own behavior by using the socialized trope of "the angry Black woman" as a scapegoat.

The final component to this theme is describing in greater detail how participants have worked to develop trust and share information with others as they navigate interactions. Participants described themselves as individuals who were deliberate in their engagement with their supervisees and others they served.

When Yvette first arrived at her current university, she found a competitive environment where other student affairs and institutional leaders were stuck in silos and described the workplace as "toxic." Yvette stated,

> My first two years here I felt it was very toxic. I don't know if I feel it's less toxic because I've just gotten used to it, and not that it's any real less toxic, I'm just maybe more used to it.

Yvette alluded to the overall lack of a familial vibe and "culture of care" where she did not feel part of the team or of the institution, something she felt more of at her previous institution. In Yvette's narrative, she spoke about the lack of collaboration and how no one took her to lunch to build community. She also spoke to the lack of connection she has for her current institution because she has not felt welcome stating,

> My affinity is more tied to [my previous institution]. And I had that even prior to recognizing that I will be an alumni from [my previous institution], right? I felt affinity as a staff member at [my previous institution]. I don't feel affinity to [this university]. I wear [the logo] because I have to. On the outside after hours, if I need a tee shirt, I might throw one of my tee shirts because I have so many

144

[university] tee shirts. But I don't wear [the university] tee shirts and wear [the
university] proudly. I don't have a connection to the university.

She continued,

I was not welcomed here. I cried a lot my first year here. I didn't feel

welcomed at all. So, I have shifted that to make sure that people who have

come after me feel welcomed. I take them out, I set up a lunch to bring

people in and meet with people. And then I've worked hard to create those

relationships with my peers that I didn't have before. So now I feel like I have

directors and my coworkers on my level that I can jive with now. But I'm

talking it took five, six years before that even happened. And the first one it

happened with, he left a year after that. And I was like, Just when I finally

have somebody, you going to freaking ditch me. So, when I say toxic, that's

part of what I mean.

The culture of care and familial atmosphere Yvette described has carried over to how
she built relationships among her office staff. Her staff call the office a little family and
Yvette has built an environment of shared respect and trust for each other. As the
director she said, "I think my role is that I then spoil them, and that's good, and that's
bad. And so I qualify that with them to try and help them understand that outside of our
space things are different." When asked how she created her office environment and
how she navigates her role as the director with her staff she shared,

I pass down more than I should sometimes and earlier than I should, because I

am transparent and I will always be. I also know who and when to trust my team

and the staff. And so I don't have any concern for trust, so I don't get in trouble

because I don't get caught. And the moment that I might, I just wouldn't say it.

So, I'm choosing to share more with the team and they value that and respect that

so much that they're going to honor. So it's about gaining the respect and trust of

the team members too, from them to me, so that I can then trust them too.

Because they trust me to take care of them, so they're going to take care of me.

However, this is not without challenges. The constant sharing of information and

translating behavior to her staff is tiring, as discussed earlier. Instead, Yvette has learned

to cope by shifting how she interacts with her staff and has broken down traditional

hierarchical lines.

I have shifted in my expectations personally, so that I can do this role better and

sustain the energy at the consistency level that I prefer to have with the team and

for the team. I realized that I don't get as much as I do. And so what happens is

that, I get empty sometimes, and I just can't… Years ago, I learned how to let

others give to me. And so I just learned how to do that, and I let them pour into

me…. I don't know many people that have that kind of staff and that kind of

relationship with their staff to get to a point of allowing them to just take care of

you when you can't take care of them, and being okay with that. I mean, I was

vulnerable. Vulnerability. That's why I say we are a family.

Accepting physical and emotional support from supervisees reinforced a trusting

relationship among her staff an egalitarian approach of shared responsibility for each

other. Yvette recalled a recent conversation that recognized the closeness of the

relationships with her staff and other Latina colleagues,

> Someone, I don't remember who it was, but someone in my life recognized that,
>
> and they said "You know what [Yvette], if there's anything that I have noticed
>
> that's been different in your time at [your current institution], is that your
>
> relationships with the people you work with are tighter. They're just different.
>
> You weren't that close to people who you worked with when you were anywhere
>
> else." And they were right about that.

She continued,

> I think it's because of the culture here, right? So there is, once you find people
>
> who are like minded, you hold onto them tighter because you feel like you have
>
> to be because you don't have any other support, and you don't have it anywhere
>
> else. And especially since I didn't feel welcomed my first year, outside of my
>
> area as well as inside of the area, it wasn't until I started hiring, people started
>
> leaving, I said, "Right." I think that that really also helped make a difference in
>
> what that looked like for me and what I wanted to create because of what I didn't
>
> have when I first got here.

> Jesús, while similar to Yvette in that he views his role as a translator of

information, further discussed how he has built trust among his staff through deliberate

sharing of his own experiences with racism and feeling marginalized from others on

campus.

I have [vented] with my staff, we talk about it. And we're able to breakdown and

just like definitely I wasn't okay, but it's like we have to make a joke out of it like

it happens. Unfortunately, it happens more than often. Especially when there's

another Hispanic individual that had a similar name working here. And so they

are like, "They're going to call you [Carlos]," or that something rhymes with your

name...But I do get to vent with my office. Individuals that have many different

identities and have experienced some similar things as to my... and even in so

many different settings. Yeah, that's how I vent. We cool it off afterwards,

because I'd come back and I was like, "Yeah, guess what just happened to me?"

And we just get to vent it out and we talk about it.

He continued to share how his venting sessions allow him to debrief his experiences

with his staff and also use them as a sounding board for his feelings.

So, vent, and you have to blow off some steam. I don't ever want...I'm not one to

be very confrontational. But sometimes, it also depends on the week I'm having. I

don't ever want to blow off, blow up on someone, because I think that would

create opposite. I don't think they'll realize how offended you were, like I don't

know if you are offended. It really depends on the situation. Like the name thing,

like I just... I joke about it now but it was, they're like, "We're not the same

person," we have different titles, different positions, but it's still.

Having staff members available to share experiences of racism and discuss issues

happening on campus and in society also were points alluded to by other participants

who discussed the ability of engaging their supervisees and trusted colleagues as a

148

sounding board. Jackie explained her expectation of having competent staff willing and able to have difficult conversations with others in her office.

> We don't make basic people, and the worst kind is basic white girls. Our profession is flooded with them, so you can't claim this school and be basic. So let's go with the game, which requires a social level of consciousness to be elevated on all things, we're talking about all things.

Jackie made it clear she does not want to have staff members working for her that cannot engage in difficult conversations or required Jackie and others to expend emotional energy navigating interactions with fragile staff members, particularly white women.

Building trust and sharing information with staff members was a consistent occurrence across all participants. While each participant discussed their attempt to convey information to staff members regarding policy changes or institutional politics, not everyone spoke about discussing issues of racism with their staff. A level of understanding and ability to develop connections with staff members who understood what it was like to experiences racism or listen to experiences of discrimination was critical to building those trusting relationships.

Influence of Local Community and Social Outlets

When participants were asked to further describe critical incidents that impacted their experiences as a mid-level professional, participants also shared perceptions they have of the local community and their social outlets beyond their professional role. For example, participants shared the influence on the local community had on their overall well-being and perceptions of supportive or challenging environments. Participants

shared incidents of racism they navigated within their local communities, considerations of local amenities they realized were more important than they had originally thought of when first beginning as a student affairs professional, and support systems they found outside of their respective institutions.

Racism from the Community

When asked if he have ever experienced racism or felt mistreatment because of his identity, Gabriel responded, "yes, but more from the community and not necessarily from the institution." His institution is located in a city with a population of approximately 57,000. The racial makeup of the city is predominantly African American and White at 51 percent and 42 percent, respectively. Gabriel described his current city as a very close knit community where everybody seems to know everybody. When he and his family first moved to the city, he shared how he would be regularly asked what he did and be asked to provide details of what happened to his predecessor. Gabriel discussed events his wife, who is white, experiences when taking their children out in public.

> Every now and then, she'll go to the park with them [children] or to the store, and [people] ask her what nanny service she is working with and whose kids are these, just along those lines. She's like, "This sucks." For me, it's like, "Go on. It's just the community that we live in at this point." It hasn't really come about much at the institution level, but at the same time, I think that's who we're impacted by as a community.

The local community surrounding the university is approximately 50,000 people. The university has a large presence in the community and the town was described as "close-knit where everybody knows everybody." When Gabriel first arrived at his current university, he was regularly asked at the park, grocery store, or local businesses who he was and what he did for work. He responses were regularly met with comments such as, ""Well, one, you're a little young to be that. I didn't know that you could be…" or ""Well, what happened to the last person? I really like that person." These comments may appear innocent to some, but reinforces the perpetual foreigner stereotype narrative faced by Asian Americans having their presence constantly questioned or interrogated (Ng, Lee, & Pak, 2007).

Similarly, Jackson-Evans shared how he perceived the local community surrounding the university he was working at during our first interview. When I had arrived in town to conduct the interview, I was impressed with the number of openly displayed rainbow pride flags in the local shops and around town of this small rural Midwest city. However, Jackson-Evans shared how he still did not feel included, nor welcomed, in the local community as a gay Black man. He commented how he still experienced moments of unease when venturing out to local restaurants and bars. He shared how some local LGBT bars or LGBT-friendly establishments would deny access to Black students or other professionals who worked at the institution. During our third interview, after he had recently moved back to the south, he shared, "People are like, and "Do you miss [the previous institution]? Do you miss [the previous state]? Do you miss the Midwest?" No. No. Nothing about it. I miss the people who I worked with. But, no."

When asked to reflect on the types of racism he experienced growing up in the south versus his time in the Midwest, he replied,

> It was more overt in the Midwest versus what I had experienced here [current city], as being more covert. And I say that because of the fact that I don't know if it's because of the current political climate of our country. I'm sure that has a lot to do with it. I've told people oftentimes, "I can count on one time... I can count on one hand the amount of times I was called, knowingly, called a nigger in Texas. It was far less than the amount of times I was called a nigger in my two and a half years in the Midwest." I feel like with that being said, that racism and the discrimination that was present in the Midwest, people just expect it and it's just allowed. People are more emboldened about it than they are here. Of course, it exists here, but I never... It never was that much of an issue for me, here. I knew it existed, but it didn't rear its ugly head like it did when I was in [the Midwest].

Jackson-Evans' experience echoes a recent study asserting that Midwestern cities are some of the worst places for Blacks to live (Gordon, 2019). The study particularly highlights the continued implications of systemic housing segregation that renders most Black people in Midwestern cites as "hypervisible" or "out of place," which is further compounded by living in a rural university community where almost 85% of the population is white.

Local Amenities

Beyond the direct experiences of racism, participants also shared how the presence or lack of local amenities also contributed to their overall experience as a mid-level professional. Lauren, for example, stated "You know, what keeps me at [this Institution] is not [the Institution]. What keeps me [here] is [the city] at the moment…You could slap a whole other school name on it, and I really wouldn't care." She went on to share, "I have this amazing city around me that I get to roll off into the sunset every day. You know, I can't imagine being someplace without, I mean, just a total lack of resources or outlets." Almost to the word, Yvette shared,

> I don't have a connection to the university. People ask me, "Oh my God, you
> must love working at [the university], or "how much do you love working at [the
> university]?" I'm like, "I love [The City]." It's like, redirect that conversation.
> Because I just don't have an affinity to this institution.

Yvette continued to explain the amenities her current city offers that her previous institution's locations did not have available. She listed major sporting teams, cultural experiences such as access to Broadway shows and concerts, and different cuisines available at local restaurants. Yvette ended by stating, "I'm not kept at [this institution], I'm kept at [the current city]. [This institution] is just allowing me to do that well because they also pay me well."

In her first interview, Jackie shared she decided to go natural with her hair shortly before beginning graduate school. She stated, "I asked the one question that would be like the catalyst for like, how to make decisions. I said, where would I get my

hair done?" The school she was interviewing with was located in a smaller Midwestern town and she would have to drive at least an hour away to find a hair salon knowledgeable of working with a Black woman's hair. In a later interview I asked Jackie to further reflect on the influences of her current city's amenities and if they became a deciding factor for her move to take her current role. She said,

I definitely do. You know, I tell young grads, what are your deal breakers when their job searching? And for me, it's getting my hair done and access to an airport within an hour, like 30 minutes actually. And [the city], it provides that it's a culturally diverse city, we have an international airport 18 miles from my house. You know, all those factors, I think also play into people who live here. It is good for young families… the location of the city, we're two hours from the mountains, two hours from the beach. So I think all of those things have played in to why people stay. But definitely the size and city.

Jackie continued,

I always question my friends or colleagues of color who like apply for jobs in Idaho? Like I do. I'm sure the money is good, but I know there's not enough money for me to move there where I know I don't have a social system of some sort, or I'm the only Black person for like, three, three hours in the radius. I just don't know how they do it, especially when they're younger and single. Like, where do you get your support network from, or you just so used to that community that it's nothing? But for me, that was really, really hard. Where would I get my hair done, you know what I mean? As a grad, you can survive

154

anything for two years, but as a professional, that big city draw or a sizable city

is, is really important.

As a supervisor of a younger Black woman professional, Jackie also shared the

conversations and support she provides the younger professional to find places to go out

and find other community within the city. Jackie stressed the importance for her to be

able to retreat from work and find safety beyond the walls of an institution, a point she

emphasizes to the younger professionals of color she supervises.

Support and Identity Networks

In many of my participants' lives, support networks served as a primary source

of affirmation that helped them to process their work or release pressure they felt from

their professional roles. They particularly shared the importance of surrounding

themselves with other people that looked like them, both in the institutional and social

setting of their lives. For example, Yvette has cultivated a group of other Latinas at her

institution where, for the first time, she has felt support. They will regularly connect over

meals and see each other on campus. More importantly, Yvette shared how much she

feels empowered by being with other Latinas the pride they share in their identity. She

stated, "that they really want me to rock it and they're behind me and they're there with

me. Empowerment, empowering women. I didn't really always feel that a lot of times."

She went on to share,

> This is women empowering women like. Some of this other stuff is fake but this
>
> is the real deal right here. And it's just pretty bad ass, it's pretty beautiful to have
>
> a solid core of women who talk like me, look like me, and walk with the baggage

155

that we have and the issues that our identity may bring with us. We walk with it very proudly. We don't hide it, we know it. We know that it's a part of who we are and what we bring to the table, and we're proud of that. And part of why we are who we are in our role. I fully believe that the reason why I come from a place of care is not because I just happened to come from a place of care and I said, "[Yvette], this is how you're going to be as a professional, you're always come from a place of care." No, I recognize that I come from a place of care and that is a value that I have of authenticity and care, the two main things that I live with, but that place of care that comes from being Latina. That comes from my culture. We care about everybody. We don't care what the hell you look like, because we all look like everything.

Yvette placed a huge value on her ability to connect with other Latina women in administrative leadership roles at her institution who can empathize with her as a Latina, but also understands the work of a student affairs professional.

Jesús found support and an outlet within a local nonprofit that focuses on community development and programming for the Latinx population in his city. He said, "The local community, I have found that has slowly supported more. There're various nonprofit organizations that I see, that I'm a part of that I volunteer at. I see the support there." In an earlier interview, Jesús discussed his the involvement in the local nonprofit and how it often overlaps with his role as a university administrator and does not have the ability to fully escape work.

I am a part of a nonprofit organization and they sponsor a program, which is a road to college program for students. [University representatives] show up to those events to help with financial aid questions and students, but in the past couple of times, we really haven't had any Spanish-speaking individuals. I show up because I'm a board member of [The Organization] and no matter what happens, if I'm present at [the event], I always speak on behalf of [the university], because there is no one there to speak Spanish. So I'm already there as a Board Member, but the director of that program asks if I can just say a little something on behalf of [the university] to the parents. So that's an additional thing I do with the nonprofit community that I'm a part of.

Jesús continued to describe his involvement with the local nonprofit community, but contrasted the support he feels he receives with the lack of visibility in staff and programming he sees at the university. He stated,

But I don't say... it's never enough, but I think at the university level, like it's [support] not here for staff and students or faculty members. So yeah, I don't necessarily think that it [programming and financial support] has been a priority but it's not necessarily right now and it doesn't necessarily exist on campus. Like not that it doesn't exist, but it's not fully there or fully functioning.

Jesús values the ability to give back to the Latinx local community and see the impact of his work with the nonprofit organizations. However, he also illustrates the cross-over labor that exists of him still performing university functional duties outside of his formal job responsibilities, which is not compensated for equitability in time or money.

157

Perpetuation and Disruption of Racism in Student Affairs

In the final interview, participants were asked to elicit ways they see racism being maintained, expectations of their supervisors and supervisees in addressing racism, and their thoughts on ways to disrupt racism with student affairs. Participants illustrated how racism is upheld differently across hierarchical lines as well as racial lines of power and privilege. For example, white supervisees jumping rank over their Black supervisor to complain to a senior administrator and the white administrator blindly accepting the story of the white supervisee. It also manifests when a white administrator makes a racist comment in a meeting and no one calls him out on it or is hesitant to challenge the comment out of a fear of being labeled as a "troublemaker" or potentially face negative professional consequences.

They also shared how expectations of responsibility further differs across those hierarchical lines within student affairs.

"Man, being white is just wild!"

The stories of multiple participants also highlight the pervasiveness of racism that stems from whites unaware or unwilling to engage and challenge racist behaviors. Some participants chose to address racist behaviors and policies to their supervisors and supervisees. However, significant time and labor went into deciding whether to respond to racism and preparing for the conversations. Participants stressed the importance of whites being more willing to interrogate their own identity and behaviors, but more importantly be more willing to engage in challenging racist behaviors and practices. For

158

instance, when Lauren was asked about her expectations of white people in addressing racism and the privilege whites hold. She stated,

> I think my expectation is that the next time you encounter an act of racism or discrimination, or the next time you have an African American person on your team, or the next time an African American person seems to be a little off put one day, that you step back and have a deeper moment of reflection, than you might have before we had the conversation. That you are at least open to say like, "I'm not going to react immediately to that. I'm not going to go to a negative place with that. I'm going to take a moment and try to have some empathy or some compassion, or a narrative that that person is living that I don't understand, but at least I now know exists. I am going to try to at least think deeper than what my initial reaction would have been three weeks ago when we had a conversation." I think that's all that I actually expect of people at this point. I don't know if that's sad or good. I have no idea.

Highlighting the privilege many whites have in navigating the world, her response continued,

> I think that as a white person, there's just a lot of privilege there. Someone had put something crazy on Twitter about our current president, and somebody retweeted it with a comment like, "Man. Being white is just wild." He was just like, "That is just so crazy that you can walk around thinking that, and it's totally fine that you can do that." And I think, "Man. Wouldn't that be awesome?" And this may be terrible, why would I want to give that up? Why would I want to give

159

that privilege up? To walk around in complete bliss about the world and how it

works. And not having any sort of responsibility of my part in it. Why would I

want to give that up? I honestly think about that. Because man, that would be an

incredible life. Think about ... I mean, you are white. So like, think about how the

moment that you become aware that shit is wrong, it changes your whole mood.

When you all of the sudden are like, "I have to be critical of so many things."

Lauren expresses her desire to have whites be more reflective of their own experience

and consideration for others, yet she also points to a limited belief that much will

change. She asserted, "I don't think that my expectation for any white person that I have

this conversation with is like a transformative expectation. I am not naïve in any way."

Lauren's comments might sound pessimistic or cause the shaking of heads to hear such a

somber message. However, her point echoes ones made by Derrick Bell (1992) and

Richard Delgado (1992) that assert believing the possibility of overcoming racism does

more to comfort and soothe white psychological comfort than it does for any meaningful

progress toward racial justice.

Jackson-Evans expressed similar sentiment when he discussed the persistent

presence of racism in student affairs by assuming the field is a bastion of inclusion,

stating,

It exists, and we try to act like it doesn't because we want to act like we are the

finished cookies in student affairs…I think that we like to pretend, we like to put

this fancy lacquer on Student Affairs, or this gloss to make it seem like we are

doing this work, and fighting the fight, and we need to train the students. We

160

need to train ourselves. And for the people who don't want to be trained, you got

to go.

Student affairs practitioners often become socialized into the field concentrating on

helping students and less time spent interrogating existing systems and personal

behaviors that are problematic (Bondi, 2012). While not explicitly mentioned by the

participants, student affairs graduate programs play a major role in the perpetuation of

racism in the field by lacking a comprehensive curriculum that interrogates the historical

foundations and contemporary manifestations of racism in higher education. Further

still, is the hesitancy or avoidance of whites in graduate preparation programs from

engaging in conversation about difficult topics (Linder, Harris, Allen, & Hubain, 2015).

To be sure, this is not solely a problem with white graduate students not engaging in

conversations about race and racism in class, but also the inability of many white

graduate faculty members from incorporating ample ability to dive into these topics

while also educating themselves about racism and not relying on students of color to

educate their peers (Harris & Linder, 2018;Hubain, Allen, Harris, & Linder, 2016).

Unwritten Rules and Blueprint of Expectations

Beyond the individual actions of people, participants also alluded to the

unwritten rules and expectations they see within the field and the work of student affairs.

They pointed to institutional norms, recruiting practices, and field socialization that

reinforce a dominant narrative privileging white norms of behaviors and success

participants must navigate. T. J., for example, talked about a request he received from a

student group to attend a meeting during a weekend day he was planning on staying

161

home with his family. Living approximately 45 minutes away from campus would have required him to spend at least half of day commuting and attending a meeting.

> We love to talk to students about how co-curricular can build you just as a better person outside of the curricular, even make you more appealing to employers, make you more well-rounded just for the world, prepare better citizens for an ever changing world type of situation, but when it comes to the staff, I think there is always this mindset of well yeah you just have to give a little more. You have to care a little more, a couple more late nights, a couple more weekend opportunities. I was here on Saturday for university's family day, and then on Sunday a chapter wanted me to come and do a training for them. I felt bad about having to say "yeah, I can't come" or "I'm not coming," because I just wanted to rest. Then my wife pushed back and was like, "they couldn't pay me to come in on a Sunday, or something. You're over here feeling bad." It's like that, and it's that aspect of we're not... are we doing enough and doing what we're doing to make sure that the student is the well-rounded individual and feels that sense of community? Are we doing a disservice to the [students] who are working at that goal?

The vacillation T. J. had of choosing to rest rather than attend a student meeting on a weekend and feeling guilty of prioritizing himself over his students is a common thread in helping professions such as student affairs (Miller, 2016). T. J.'s comment also highlights how the self-care rhetoric in student affairs is often used to expect more work

from practitioners and prioritizing self-care when work is complete (Squire & Nicolazzo, 2019).

Lauren illustrated the socialized expectations placed on graduate students entering the field of student affairs and that carries through in expectations of younger professionals. When asked if she feels there is a predefined social script for the field, she said,

> Well, I mean, I think, um, you go to a particular grad program, and people decide whether or not that's a good one or not do you know what I mean, like, everyone has their thoughts. And then you find yourself on some sort of campus or sort of entry level position. If you stay there in that position longer than 4 years, that's problematic, you need to get out, right? Then you move up, you do your mid-level manager thing. You know, and I think in Greek life and also comes with you better [volunteer for leadership conferences], you better do [attend professional development workshops], you better go to [the annual conference], people better be calling you to facilitate their leadership conferences otherwise, like you're, you're irrelevant. Then you do your middle manager thing, maybe you're director of something and you can stay director for a long time, kinda like that's kind of okay. Like, you kind of made it there. But we also want to see like, being a dean of students or being a vice president…Then you have to be really involved in ACPA or NASPA, you got to pick one. If you want to be taken seriously, it better be NASPA. Right? And you have to figure that out. Then, how do I judge my worth, by adhering to or not adhering to that script?

In his narrative in the preceding chapter, Jackson-Evans further highlighted the social

pressures he felt in seeking progressively higher job responsibilities and opportunities.

He said,

> I have climbed and held every position possible. Been a GA, GA to a
>
> coordinator, coordinator to an assistant director, assistant director to associate
>
> director, Associate Director to director, director to assistant Dean. I followed the
>
> blueprint, the roadmap that people saying that this is what you're supposed to do.

However, he called attention to the expectations he felt in being a representative for

other Black students and other Black professionals, "because people need to see.

Students need to see you. The white folks need to see that you are, we're able to do this

too."

> Lauren continued from her earlier comment if she felt the social script and

expectations were similar for Whites and Blacks. She stated,

> I think for the people of color, I think there's a small group of people that get
>
> everything. You see the same group of Black and Brown folks who get
>
> everything in our world and there are a ton who are like, "I have no idea how to
>
> get into that hole." But because we operate from scarcity, we don't let people in
>
> very well and if you want to be a part of the big kids group, you better pull your
>
> stuff together, and you better show up. Right? Like, you better polish it up and
>
> you better be as white as you possibly can.

The examples above illustrate organizational or reinforced systems that are often treated

as a "norm" or expectation in student affairs. Although seemingly innocuous routines or

expectations that should apply to everyone equally, minoritized professionals are rewarded for adhering to the norms or are sanctioned for deviating. Specifically, whiteness is seen as a credential providing access to organizational resources and agency. Due to the "institutionalized" or "taken-for-granted" nature of organizational hierarchies, whiteness remains largely implicit and unnamed (Ray, 2019). However, when professionals do not adhere to socialized scripts accepted as the "norm," those behaviors are viewed as illegitimate to an assumed "neutral" organization (Moore & Bell, 2011).

In the daily lives of minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators, rewards come to those who have the ability to strategically code-switch in and out of hierarchical roles and who adopt the "normative" culture of the institution and of the field. Those who do have the capital to code-switch, both culturally *and* organizationally are rewarded with promotion, legitimacy, and absorbed as a normative part of the institution. However, the claim of that mid-level managers will often adopt normative scripts of the organization to ease role conflict (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017) ceases to nuance to how organizational norms are assumed neutral. Moreover, claims of organizational code-switching may actually create a new hidden hierarchy within an institution between those with the capital to code-switch and those that cannot, making it possible to further legitimate institutional norms and behaviors that are implicit and rooted in a white ethos.

Conclusion

This chapter provides an expanded description of participants' experiences navigating their role as mid-level administrators in student affairs. The descriptions

present how participants interact across the institution with supervisors, supervisees, students, and colleagues. Participants also discussed the role of the local community and perceptions of racism from the surrounding area in which they live. The participants further illuminated the impact of racism on their work and how they managed to cope. Finally, they pointed out the ways racism and whiteness in the field of student affairs is reinforced through professional socialization and practice.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In Chapter I, I provided a statement of the research problem, the purpose and significance of the study, and the research questions that guided this study. I also presented a personal reflection on my approach to this study as a privileged white researcher and provided an explanation of language and terms used in this dissertation. In Chapter II, I presented a comprehensive overview of the literature giving context for this study and presented my theoretical frameworks used to guide this research project. I explained the methodology of this research study in Chapter III, which included the research design, methods for collecting and analyzing data, and a discussion on the influences on me as a researcher. In Chapter IV, I presented demographic and relevant background information of the participants and also provided an introduction of each participant and justification of using first-person narratives prior to presenting the individual narratives for each participant. Chapter V included an expanded account of findings and interpretations from this study. In this last chapter, Chapter VI, I provide a summary of this research study and answers to the research questions. I further discuss implications for policy, practice and processes, including directions for future research.

Research Summary

The purpose of this research study was to understand the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators working at predominantly white institutions. The findings from this study add to the limited body of

literature exploring the experiences of mid-level student affairs administrators (Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Rosser, 2004) and call to incorporate the voices and experiences of marginalized and underrepresented populations in leadership roles (Parker, 2004). This study provide additional nuance to the experiences of administrators understanding of their mid-level role *and* navigating racism in student affairs. Particularly, this study illuminates how identity and positional power dynamics affect the navigation of mid-level student affairs administrators offering insight to the ways racism is upheld in student affairs practice.

The study intentionally centered the experiences of professionals whose voices have historically been marginalized and excluded in the canon of higher education and student affairs literature. The participants in this study were gracious to provide their stories and details of daily interactions with individuals across their institutions while asserting the painful reality racism continues to have on society and higher education institutions. However, they also remain vulnerable from the sharing of these experiences openly. This study can further challenge dominant master narratives present in student affairs and organizational literature that uncritically examine organizational hierarchy and experiences of racially minoritized administrators. Additionally, this study sheds some light into ways to disrupt persisting racism in student affairs through practice, processes, and policies, while introducing possibilities for future research examining the intersections of personal identity and organizational power dynamics.

The following I now turn to a discussion addressing each of the three research questions that guided this study.

Discussion for Research Question One

The initial wording of the first research question was: *What are the lived experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators working at predominantly white institutions?* In response to this research question, the participants' answers illustrated a myriad of daily encounters that arose resulting from their racial/ethnic identity and their mid-level administrative position. However, the nature of this qualitative study challenged me to remain open and allow the participant stories to naturally emerge during the interviews (Patton, 2002). This resulted in a reframing of the first research question to state: *What emerged from the lived experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators working at predominantly white institutions?* The reframing of this research question was based on the wide latitude provided to participants and how their salient experiences informed their professional and personal lives.

Listening to their stories, participants shared how their early introductions to student affairs was a result of building relationships with student organizational advisors or senior student affairs administrative staff who identified participants as having promising potential in the field. Participants also shared their own desires to work with students and contribute to their development. This finding echoes existing research of decisions to enter the student affairs profession (Taub & McEwen, 2006). What is striking however, was the salience of early experiences shared by many participants having with navigating predominantly white spaces from an early age or being

socialized into the field by white administrators, a point further addressed in a following section.

Many participants felt early exposure to diverse or predominantly white spaces was useful in their ability to navigate their roles. Some participants pointed to early mentors who explicitly discussed the *rules* and *expectations* of being a minoritized professional in a predominantly white field. Take, for example, when Jackie shared the story of a mentor who coached her how to respond to racism and not be seen as "the angry Black woman." This type of awareness aided in the participants' ability to anticipate systemic barriers or adjust their behaviors when interacting with white colleagues. For example, Lauren viewed her early exposure to predominantly white spaces as a "credential" (Ray, 2019) for her being able to navigate her current and former administrative roles and tactfully challenge oppressive systems and advocate for herself and others at her institution. In another instance, Gabriel stated his awareness of how he sees himself being received by senior administrators and other colleagues compared to when women, particularly Black women are often ignored or shut down in meetings for saying the same thing. Critical race theorists consider whiteness as a form of property (Harris, 1993) and credentialing attribute within organizations (Ray, 2019). In other words, behavior in closer proximity to whiteness was rewarded and viewed as more credible. Seeing whiteness as property is not simply symbolic representation, legitimacy, access to resources, and ability to fulfill job responsibilities are bounded by whiteness.

Participants also illustrated their experience with individual racism and institutional racism that impedes their professional and personal lives. For example, individual racism occurred when Jesús was regularly confused for another Latino male who worked at his institution, or, when Jackie was called "Harambe" by a white fraternity member at a tailgate. Institutional racism is more subtle and expressed in the practice of higher education institutions and reflected in disparities in representation, treatment, or distribution of resources. For instance, Lauren spoke to the need to temper her language or only speak about diversity, equity, and inclusion issues when asked by another colleague out of fear for being seen as the "angry Black woman." Institutional racism also manifested when Yvette first arrived at her institution and did not feel supported and saw a lack of other Latinas in leadership roles she could lean on for support.

Participants also revealed the toll of conflicting roles having to navigate racism and institutional politics while also being there to support their staff and students. All participants saw part of their role to pass along information and serve as a conduit for organizational communication. The "vertical code-switching" (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017) or "organizational translating" (Barner, 2011) necessary at the mid-level of an organization resulted in emotional, physical, and physiological tension between incompatible expectations of different levels of the institution. The organizational translation required mid-level administrators to adapt and change at a moment's notice guiding students and supervisees through institutional bureaucracies, yet serving as an agent of the institution and its senior leadership. However, the result of these experiences

places an invisible burden onto the shoulders of minoritized mid-level administrators where colorblind organizational theory is not solely attuned to capture. For example, Ray (2019) asserts the organizational theory must also challenge unmarked whiteness of organizations and understand how agency is inhibited by controlling time or limiting the range of emotional expressions.

The local community amenities, or lack thereof, also emerged from participants' narratives. In the spatial analysis work of George Lipsitz (2007, 2011), he highlights the spatial imaginary in the U.S. and how many environments are racially marked as being white creating another manifestation of institutional racism. Some participants shared their ability to cope with the racism experienced at work by having local community and amenities available without the need to travel long distances. For example, Yvette, Jesús, Jackie, and Lauren all mentioned the value they place on having local organizations, cultural events, or places to get their hair done surrounding their institution.

Scholars have explored notions of how white dominance occurs in higher education, but their analysis is largely limited to white spaces on campus (Harper & Hurtado, 2007), campus images and symbolism (Cabrera, Watson, & Franklin, 2016), and institutional discourse (Moore & Bell, 2017). This study further illustrates the expansion of white dominance in higher education spaces in local communities surrounding many higher education institutions and that are largely absent from higher education and organizational literature.

Discussion for Research Question Two

How do these experiences impact the work and interactions of these administrator's with colleagues and students?

The experiences of racism and lack of representation at their institutions enabled an environment where participants felt both highly visible and invisible at the same time. This resulted in participants being called upon to perform extra labor serving as "representation" for their respective racial/ethnic identities, tasked with educating their supervisors, supervisees, institutional colleagues, or students on racism and microaggressions they personal experienced or witnessed. In her narrative, Lauren alluded to diversity and inclusion rhetoric often occurring on campus, yet leadership teams are largely white and seeing no place for her to go at her current institution. Still, Lauren remains committed to her work and being there for her supervisees, but takes her "talents and extra energy to the local community that cherishes it better." Yvette shared her consistent exhaustion from serving as a translator of information for her office staff and having few other Latinas at her institution in leadership roles to lean on for support. Gabriel felt compelled to build relationships with colleagues in order to "demystify a lot of assumptions" about being an Asian American and building social capital for his director role. Jesús is deeply committed to serving the Latinx student and local community. He is consistently called upon to serve as a representative for the Latino male population and provide his language skills to other departments with little compensation in extra time or money for his added responsibilities.

Additionally, participants shared the lack of representation at their institutions and within mid-level or senior administrative positions in student affairs also made them highly sought out by other minoritized student affairs professionals at their institution and from institutions across the country. For example, Yvette shared her early experiences with not feeling any support from institutional leadership, but has taken on the additional labor to make sure younger Latinx staff members felt valued and rewarded for the work. Jackie stated how she regularly gets calls from graduate students and young professionals from across the country who reach out to her for mentorship or advice.

Traditional interpretations of organizational power are largely presented in static or binary comparisons of high power and low power individuals (Anicich & Hirsh, 2017). Mid-level administrators hold a unique position of regularly interacting with senior administrators, supervisees, and students. Mid-level administrators are responsible for overseeing or implementing programs yet are also the victims of organizational decisions occurring at the senior administrative levels (Belch & Strange, 1995; McClellan, 2012; Mills, 2009). When Yvette shared her exhaustion from consistently having to explain changes being made at the senior administrative levels to her staff, contemporary organizational literature, or the sole utilization of AIA would assert this as a "normal" aspect of organizational translation across hierarchies. The same can be said of Jackson-Evans ensuring he protects his staff from issues occurring outside of his office or funneled down from senior leadership. However, the additional utilization of Critical Race Theory requires race *and* power must be situated within context of these

174

relationships to promote a fuller understanding of how racism and whiteness operate within society (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Participant's narratives suggest organizational translating, or vertical code-switching (Anicish & Hirsh, 2017), also cut across racial lines during cross-racial interactions requiring extra consideration for how actions and communication is perceived. For example, Lauren faced racism when a former white supervisee jumped rank and literally cried to Lauren's supervisors complaining about a lack of support the supervisee was receiving rather than speaking directly with Lauren. Lauren's authority was questioned and assumed aggressive by both her supervisee and incompetent by her supervisor. Lauren's status as a supervisor became subverted. Lauren also had to contend with the reception of how her style of supervision would be interpreted by her supervisee and the lack of racial consciousness Lauren's supervisor had in accepting the supervisee's words as the sole truth without consulting Lauren. Similarly, Jackie shared stories of crying colleagues, and experiences with students who viewed her as aggressive, assaulted her physical appearance, or questioned her authority as a director. Further, the duality Jackie illustrated between her professional and personal lives are a result of understanding what actions and behaviors are deemed "acceptable" in her professional life and consequently, rewarded.

Experiences of having authority questioned or being victim of white tears are consistent with the literature on microaggressions in higher education, but the discussion is largely limited to minoritized faculty (Griffin, Ward, & Phillips, 2014; Patton & Catching, 2009; Stanley et al., 2003). The experiences the mid-level participants shared

175

further demonstrate the extra time required resolving issues with their supervisors, the mental labor of withholding emotions out of fear of white discomfort or reactive violence (DiAngelo, 2018), and cross-racial communication being easily dismissed or misinterpreted as aggressive by white people. Not only must racially-minoritized mid-level administrators navigate vertical hierarchies with their institutions, they must also contend with the racial consciousness with their colleagues who are preoccupied with preserving white interests or those able to recognize and willing to dismantle racialized structures within the institution and larger society (Haynes, 2017).

Another observation that deserves mention is the dialogue that often emerged with participants and their supervisees when they discussed experiences with racism or institutional politics. Some participants shared their direct experiences with racism either one-on-one or with their entire staff in meetings. In addition, participants discussed how cathartic those conversations were knowing they had supervisees who believed and were willing to engage in discussion. At times the vulnerability expressed by participants translated into having other staff members share their experiences with racism or microaggressions due to other minoritized identities (i.e. sexism, homophobia, xenophobia). Although these conversations took time and energy to engage, participants shared the impact having these discussions had on building a more unified and trusting environment among the staff they supervised. This finding echoes earlier work by scholars who documented greater likelihood of engaging in discussions about race among Supervisors of Color and supervisees who were white (Sue & Constantine, 2007).

Discussion for Research Question Three

What ways are racist structures reinforced or disrupted in student affairs work?

The lack of racial theorizing in dominant organizational theory does not consider how white interests and whiteness is legitimized and rewarded for the conformity to white norms within organizations (Harris, 1993; Ray, 2019). For example, being white or performing whiteness (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) carries more privileges than being of Color or not willing or unable to engage in cross-cultural code-switching (Molinsky, 2007). Jackie, who knowingly is careful to "not scare white people" with her actions, dress, or men she dates, is rewarded for her awareness and ability to navigate predominantly white spaces. Racism is further reinforced in situations similar to what Jesús shared when his supervisor was not confronted for suggesting a stereotypical meal is being served to celebrate a cultural heritage event, or, when institutional leaders fail to engage in more inclusive behaviors due to fear of backlash from institutional stakeholders and the local community surrounding the institution. The emotional and psychological comfort of whites is prioritized over potential conflict that may arise from these groups.

As other participants illustrated, attitudes and behaviors grounded in whiteness are largely rewarded, whereas behaviors that deviate from the dominant white norms of higher education are often met with rebuttal or sanction as an example. Jackson-Evans asserted the need to change existing practices and what "constitutes excellence" in student affairs, stating, "These concepts of how people frame excellence for leadership, or what is professional, or a number of criteria that I think is still very centered and

rooted in status quo whiteness." Indeed, higher education professional associations'

award recognition also mirror the assertion that to be "excellent" one is often white and

often identified as men (Bazner, Vaid, & Stanley, 2020). Some readers may question

why more participants, like Lauren, could not call out racist behaviors of racism

themselves. However, within racialized organizations (Ray, 2019) power and privilege is

not equally distributed. The decision for a racially minoritized administrator to call out

racist behavior results in vastly different results than if a white administrator were to

state the same thing. This places a hidden burden onto the shoulders of racially

minoritized individuals to educate others about racism while defending their own

humanity in the face of microaggressions or pointing our racist practices. As Jackie

declared in her narrative, "I just don't have the luxury of reacting and that is the added

layer of my job that I don't think white professionals have to deal with." There are far

fewer risks for whites associated with overcoming the psychological barriers of comfort

than it is for a minoritized person to overcome the potential personal and professional

repercussions with asserting their humanity (DiAngelo, 2018).

Reinforcement is part of a larger cycle of socialization that occurs within society

at an institutional level and an individual level (Harro, 2013). Harro's Cycle of

Socialization asserts individuals receive systemic training of accepted behaviors or

implicit and explicit messages of "how to be." Examining society as a whole, Harro's

model states enforcement of these norms occurs as a result of adhering or deviating from

these social scripts. These enforcements further collude with institutional actors to

uphold behaviors as acceptable and further legitimate them as a norm.

Participants in this study illustrated their early socialization to white spaces have aided them in navigating their roles as a mid-level administrator at predominantly white intuitions. Their early socialization of "how to be" within white spaces was largely meet with reward and, perhaps, even being introduced to student affairs by a mentor or early supervisor in college. This begs a larger inquiry into not just how student affairs professionals were introduced to the field, but, how those already in the field encouraged individuals to first consider student affairs as a potential career path.

Individuals who model the accepted norms of the field as an undergraduate student are tapped to consider student affairs and those that do not are ignored. For example, while reflecting on our interviews Jackie shared her thoughts on how her identities as a Black woman has had on her interactions with others over her career. She stated,

> I think one of the impacts, and this is going to sound really weird, but sometimes I feel, and I don't feel bad about this, maybe I'm honored by this, but I feel for some administrators I've either worked with or worked for, I feel a little bit like their trophy… Maybe it's race, who knows because a lot of those people were white and like, "Look at this poor Negro [sarcasm] we brought up here. We did this." You know what I mean? And I don't think they think like that, but I can see how it could feel like that or come across like that. Like, "Here's one of our success stories."

This quote reveals a huge implication of how individuals are encouraged and rewarded for their behavior in the field. Further, it supports and adds additional nuance to the

179

assertion of CRT that progress of racial justice (i.e. increased representation) only occurs

at the converging interests of whites (i.e. identifying individuals who adopt institutional

norms) (Bell, 1980).

To be sure, racism in higher education and in particularly, student affairs, is not a

new phenomenon. Higher education institutions were founded for white, cisgender,

heterosexual, upper-class men, resulting in an institutional structure embedded and

organized by an assumption of white supremacy and reifying whiteness as an

organizational norm (Patton, 2016). The racist foundations of higher education are

further reflected in institutional policies, traditions, and practices (Gusa, 2010; Wilder,

2013). Higher education and organizational literature reflect much of the same thinking

regarding racism experienced by staff and the work experiences of mid-level student

affairs professionals. However, they are regularly treated as two distinct phenomena, or

not at all. As discussed in the review of literature, extensive research on how students

and faculty experience the campus racial climate, but far less is known about student

affairs administrators (Garcia, 2016). This lack of knowledge reduces student affairs

leaders from explicitly addressing race and racism in current student affairs practices, or

worse, makes an assumption student affairs administrators have similar experiences as

racially minoritized faculty or students.

I now turn to a presentation of implications for professional practice and

directions for future research.

Implications for Policy, Processes, and Practice and Directions for Future Research

Over the last 25 years, higher education diversity scholarship has cited the shifting demands of student demographics, such as the increase in racially minoritized students as the impetus for research (Pope et al., 2009). However, beyond demographic shifts, focused attention has been placed on understanding the work environments of student affairs and administrative professionals (e.g. Jackson & Kile, 2004; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009; Thomas, 1998; Wolfe & Freeman, 2013). This shift in focus challenges researchers and practitioners to consider circumstances beyond those directly affecting students on college campuses.

Student affairs has often been regarded as a vanguard in higher education centering the value of diversity and inclusion through professional practices and associations (ACPA & NASPA, 1998). However, despite the diversification of higher education institutions, student affairs administrative leadership remains largely white and conversations about racism remain fundamentally separate from connections to administrative work. The continued shifts in college student demographics and underrepresentation of student affairs administrators of color, particularly in senior administrative ranks, call for an increased focus on the enablers, barriers, and future directions to diversity management and what it means for higher education moving forward. Increasingly, higher education scholars are encouraging student affairs practitioners to move away from a multicultural competence lens (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2019) and stressing need to engage in more critical explorations of racism,

white supremacy, and oppression in higher education (Patton, Sánchez, Mac, & Stewart, 2019).

The recent work from ACPA, one of two main student affairs professional associations, is one example of a challenge to move away from diversity and inclusion rhetoric toward action through the use of praxis. The development of the document—*A Bold Vision Forward: A Framework for the Strategic Imperative on Racial Justice and Decolonization* (Quaye et al., 2019) is a noticeable shift from former seminal documents guiding student affairs practice. Specifically, the document moves away from philosophical interpretations of student affairs practice to one centering interrogations of racism and colonization. It further challenges researchers and practitioners to examine their work from a systemic level, opening greater possibilities to reimagine higher education and challenge existing student affairs work.

The issues participants' narratives illuminated some important issues that call for evolved approaches are multi-layered and nuanced. Participants illustrated the many ways racism manifests and the ever presence of whiteness within student affairs practice. To be sure, addressing these issues will not be solved or attained by simply listing checkboxes of programming or policy efforts. Sustained improvements can only occur if student affairs practitioners, institutional leaders, and graduate preparatory faculty become sensitized to the lived experiences of those marginalized in the field.

Implications for Student Affairs Practice

Continuous training and development is essential to foster an environment that welcomes conversations about persisting racism and presence of whiteness within

student affairs structures. Encouraging space where people, particularly from minoritized backgrounds, can come together in a supportive environment analyzing potential biases and how varying identities inform a sense of self and approach to student affairs work (Allport, 1954; Baxter Magolda, 2008; Pettigrew, 1998). For instance, the document – *A Bold Vision Forward: A Framework for the Strategic Imperative on Racial Justice and Decolonization* (Quaye et al., 2019) was developed out of deep conversations that occurred during racial caucus sessions at ACPA's annual conference. Those sustained conversations further lead to the development of professional development curriculum utilized throughout the student affairs profession and in sustained conversations each year during ACPA's annual conference.

Professional Development

Training must occur for institutional leaders, hiring managers, and new professionals to recognize racism and how white supremacy permeates institutional culture and the hidden expectations for mid-level managers. One of the most insidious characteristics of whiteness is its ability to exist unrecognized by dominant cultures and assumed as a normal expectation (Leonardo, 2004). Unchecked, it positions minoritized professionals who have developed an ability to navigate predominantly white spaces with greater reward and latitude in their professional and personal lives. A story echoed by several participants, was their ability to navigate predominantly white spaces by engaging in selective cross-cultural code-switching with their white peers. This skill was either by learned at an early age or learned the behavior developed by trusted mentors or observation throughout their professional journey. For minoritized professionals without

this skillset, consequences arise from censuring behavior, not deemed credible, or passed over altogether from entering the student affairs field. To be sure, this is not to call for more training on how to "properly" code-switch, but for whites and other institutional leaders to recognize and challenge behaviors that are largely accepted as a "norm" or "professional" within the field of student affairs and institutional culture as a whole. To do anything less would reinforce the existing hierarchy between professionals who have garnered a skill set to survive in a predominantly white space and those that have not.

Institutional leaders should support *and* attend training or listening sessions that assist with the identification of implicit bias, racism, and whiteness in student affairs and administrative practice. However, supervisors and institutional leaders cannot just provide these opportunities and not attend themselves. Moreover, these sessions must establish an environment of mutual respect and not hold issues over the head of others or threaten the livelihoods of those willing to speak up about issues. Indeed, creating an environment where professionals of all hierarchical ranks feel comfortable sharing experiences and challenging racism is not easy in non-equal hierarchies (Allport, 1954). For example, feeling displeased with many campuses hosting "town halls" in the wake of Black student activism on the University of Missouri and other campuses nationwide, I and faculty colleagues hosted dialogue circle sessions during that year. During that year, we invited senior administrators, thinking they could retreat to the back of the room and simply listen, to attend and sit in small circles amongst students, faculty, and staff to having loosely-facilitated discussions on topics such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and sexual assault on campus and in society (Bazner, Button, & Wong,

2017). These dialogues evolved into additional conversations and partnerships across campus among student groups and action planning to better support students on campus. Among students, cross-racial or intergroup dialogue has been attributed increasing the openness to diversity and development of critical thinking (Chang, Denson, Sáenz, & Misa, 2006; Sáenz, Ngal, & Hurtado, 2007). However, intergroup dialogue is often only utilized in student settings and rarely used to bring professionals together and discuss issues surrounding their experiences. Although, caution must be taken to ensure a retaliation does not occur toward minoritized professionals who do share or challenge institutional culture. Most importantly, sustained and intentional conversation is needed to shift the culture in student affairs of ignoring or choosing not to believe racism exists within the field.

Further, student affairs leaders should be more intentional with creating staff mentoring programs for new mid-level and minoritized student affairs administrators. Participants discussed the lack of support they received when first beginning their roles; intentionally pairing new or underrepresented administrators with more seasoned professionals could help alleviate the anxiety caused by balancing their mid-level roles and racism they encounter. However, careful attention should be made to identifying mentors who are mid-level administrators and are comfortable with discussing their experiences. Similar to caution needed in formulating quality intergroup dialogue, mentoring relationships must be mindful of inherent power dynamics within relationships and issues of vulnerability and trust that can prevent quality interactions (Fries-Britt & Snider, 2015). Existing supervisory lines or lack of representation may

185

further prevent establishing quality programs within a single-institution and leaders should explore collaborations with other institutions or networks within professional associations.

Acknowledging and Learning From Racism

Naming racism and accepting the experiences of minoritized voices as truth works against the dominant narrative to "not scare the white people" by protecting the emotional interests of whites and further benefiting from the persistence of racism. Harper (2012) describes how many higher education researchers often avoid direct discussions of racism, whiteness, or white supremacy. This phenomenon is only compounded by the dominant norms of academic publishing (Stanley, 2007) leading to a hesitancy of researchers avoiding such terms and leading to assumptions that racism does not exist or can be explained using some other language or reason. The consequence is racism is sidelined or decried as an excuse by most whites. Taking direction from recent Black student activists, student affairs practitioners must further insist that a race problem persists within student affairs (Haynes & Bazner, 2019). To do anything less would be antithetical to the future direction of student affairs and a disservice to the students. Until student affairs is prepared to discuss and interrogate the systemic issues of racism within the field, the underrepresentation of racially minoritized administrators will persist. Along those lines, a nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of administrators must be centered and not absorbed in essentialist narratives. Further still, in order to break a "cycle of socialization" (Harro, 2013) within the field, student affairs leaders must also recognize the reinforcing actions and

186

organizational demands that facilitate "norming" behavior that fail to name and address the implicit organizational rules that perpetuate racism.

Graduate Training

Graduate training programs should incorporate more minoritized voices of mid-level administrators in their classroom discussions. As illustrated in this study, participants traversed boundaries their white counterparts do not have to consider or deal with. Too often, student affairs graduate programs center discussions on student advising and supervision, but leave out explicit conversations on how to be a good supervisee. Courses where supervisory skills are taught should also include the knowledge and attitudes to be an effective supervisee (Davis & Cooper, 2017). For example, Accapadi's (2007) article *When White Women Cry: How White Women's Tears Oppress Women of Color* should be required reading when discussing how to be an effective supervisee in the graduate classroom.

Participatory research methods should be adapted to prepare student affairs practitioners. Although used in many research endeavors, a promising avenue to consider for practitioner-based training is the use of participatory action research (PAR). PAR is a research method defined by direct and active involvement with stakeholders (Jacobs, 2016; Serpa, Ferreira, Santos, & Teixeira, 2018) and calls to engage in a more action-oriented approach to racial justice work in student affairs (Quaye et al., 2019). PAR can serve as a valuable method learned in graduate preparation programs, professional development, and professional association practices encouraging more

active engagement in addressing racism in collaborative and nuanced ways while empowering minoritized populations.

Institutional and Local Community Leaders

A salient theme that emerged from participants' narratives was the impact of the local community. Beyond traditional implications for practice, institutional and local community leaders concerned with supporting institutional staff who live within the community must engage in more collaborative partnerships to understand the needs of professional staff and student affairs practitioners. Participants living in smaller communities expressed a lack of having access to a local barber or hair salon. Participants also shared the value they place on having access to local cultural activities, sporting events, and quality transportation options to see friends and family elsewhere. Unlike faculty members who might have the privilege of living in adjacent towns/cities and commuting a few times a week, student affairs administrators are not widely afforded shortened work schedules or inhibited from living in a more-inclusive city. If institutional leaders are serious about providing a holistic environment for racially minoritized staff, considerations for quality of living within the local community must be discussed.

Directions for Future Research

Findings from this study also point to important directions for future research and exploration at the intersection of racism and positional power within higher education. This is particularly true given the dearth of research discussing mid-level student affairs professionals and racial climate literature centering racially minoritized staff voices

(Clayborne & Hamrick, 2007; Rosser, 2004). Here, I outline a few areas for future research.

Much of the published research documenting experiences among racially/ethnically minoritized student affairs administrators is largely limited to an examination of graduate students (Harris & Linder, 2018), entry-level/new professionals (Renn & Jessup-Anger, 2008), or senior administrators (Jackson & Flowers, 2003). This study sheds light onto the administrative experiences of minoritized mid-level student affairs professionals, an often overlooked population. Future research can further center this population by exploring different experiences or identities of mid-level administrators. This study, for example, explored the narrative of mid-level student affairs administrators with wide latitude to discuss salient experiences. It did not specifically explore variations in experiences institutional type, student affairs functional area, or geographical region. Further, while some participants discussed their ability to learn how to better cope with racism over time, I did not directly explore longevity in the field or graduate/early-career socialization experiences of participants. Future studies that explicitly address these differences can provide a more nuanced understanding to the ways racism manifests within an organizational hierarchy and provide important implications for future practice.

As discussed in earlier parts of this dissertation, my privileged white male researcher identity influenced how this study was conducted. While I benefited from having prior student affairs experience and could relate to participants on a certain level, my racial identity also limited what I was fully able to understand and may have

189

prevented some participants from sharing additional information. Although I attempted

to center the voices of participants, they were still ultimately filtered through the voice

and lens of a white researcher. The complexities of qualitative research and the

researcher as an instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) limit the perspectives that can be

discovered from this topic. Researchers with racially minoritized identities wishing to

center experiences of mid-level student affairs professionals may bring additional

perspectives that can further challenge whiteness as the institutional norm in higher

education. Challenging racism in student affairs also comes from incorporating different

epistemologies of researchers.

Researchers may also wish to engage different types of research designs and

paradigms. For example, this research study utilized narrative inquiry to garner the

experiences of participants through one-on-one interviews. This type of approach may

limit what is shared to salient experiences of participants and construct a reality that does

not fully include experiences or develop an understanding of the ways racism and white

supremacy exist within student affairs unless participants and/or researcher can

explicitly name the phenomena (Polkinghorne, 2007; Tierney, 1997). Research

methodologies that incorporate formats such as autoethnography, participatory-action

research, or utilizing visual methods may garner greater understanding of the presence

and impact of racism in student affairs administrative experiences. Research can also be

done to explore more of the intersection of identities as they related to mid-level student

affairs professionals (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007), from an intersectional perspective

190

(Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991), or incorporating social power frameworks (Schaerer, Lee, Galinsky, & Thau, 2018).

Finally, participants in this study all identified as racially/ethnically minoritized. This was done intentionally and explicitly to center the voices these professionals in literature that all too often render them silenced and unknowledgeable. Although some participants discussed the conversations with the white colleagues at various ranks of organizational power, only assumptions can be made about experiences, motivations, and interpretations from interactions of whites with minoritized student affairs professionals. For example, in management literature promising research exploring white men's behavior responses following the appointment of female or a racial minority to a CEO position (McDonald, Keeves, & Westphal, 2018). The researchers found white men less likely to assist new organizational leaders and experience less affinity for the organization. Therefore, there may be practical benefits to exploring experiences of white mid-level student affairs administrators reporting to racially minoritized supervisors or having senior student affairs or university leadership with minoritized backgrounds. This can further strengthen implications for professional practice and enhance professional and graduate school socialization practices for the future of the student affairs field.

Conclusion

This study illuminated the nuanced experiences from seven participants at institutions across the country and how their experiences impacted their professional role as mid-level administrators and personal lives. Their narratives highlight the ways

racism and whiteness is reified in student affairs work and institutions of higher

education. Ultimately, what this research highlights is that racism does not simply occur

in student affairs administrative work, but is baked into the process *of* student affairs.

The utilization of Critical Race Theory alongside the organizational framework of

Approach/Inhibition/Avoidance Theory of Power further challenges researchers and

institutional leaders to understand how racism must be integrated into organizational

analysis. This research leaves ample room for future exploration expanding upon this

study's findings. If anything else, the centering of these participants' narratives will help

to dispel a comfortable sense that all is well within student affairs and be just enough to

scare some white people into action.

REFERENCES

Abes, E. S., Jones, S. R., & McEwen, M. K. (2007). Reconceptualizing the model of multiple dimensions of identity: The role of meaning-making capacity in the construction of multiple identities. *Journal of college student development*, *48*(1), 1-22.

Accapadi, M. M. (2007). When White Women Cry: How White Women's Tears Oppress Women of Color. *College Student Affairs Journal*, *26*(2), 208-215.

Ackerman, R. L. (Ed.). (2007). *The mid-level manager in student affairs: Strategies for success*. NASPA.

ACPA & NASPA. (1998). Powerful partnerships: A shared responsibility for learning. Washington, DC: Author

Ahmed, S. (2007). A phenomenology of whiteness. *Feminist theory*, *8*(2), 149-168.

Allport, G. W. (1954). (1979). The nature of prejudice. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

American Council on Education. (1937). *The student personnel point of view* (ACE Studies, Series 1, Vol. 1, No. 3). Washington, D.C.: Author

Anicich, E. M., & Hirsh, J. B. (2017). The psychology of middle power: Vertical code-switching, role conflict, and behavioral inhibition. *Academy of Management Review*, *42*(4), 659-682.

Baez, B. (2000). Race-Related Service and Faculty of Color: Conceptualizing Critical Agency in Academe. *Higher Education,39*(3), 363-391.

Barner, R. (2011). Hidden roles of the managerial coach: What routes can coaches take to go above and beyond for future leaders. *Training & Development*, 38-45.

Bazner, K. J., Button, A., & Wong, N. C. (2017, March). *Evolving the Town Hall: Responding to Campus-Based Bias*. Session presented at the annual meeting of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), San Antonio, TX.

Bazner, K. J., Vaid, J., & Stanley, C. A. (2020). Who is meritorious? Gendered and racialized discourse in named award descriptions in professional societies of higher education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 1-17.

Belch, H. A., & Strange, C. C. (1995). Views from the bottleneck: Middle managers in student affairs. *NASPA Journal*, 32(3), 208-222.

Bell, D. (1980). Brown vs. Board of Education and the interest convergence principle. *Harvard Law Review*, 93, 518-533.

Bell, D. (1992). Racial realism. Connecticut Law Review, 24(2), 363-380.

Bergerson, A. A. (2003). Critical race theory and white racism: Is there room for white scholars in fighting racism in education?. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *16*(1), 51-63.

Birnbaum, R. (1988) How colleges work: the cybernetics of academic organization and leadership. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA.

Blimling, G. S., & Whitt, E. J. (1998). Principles of Good Practice: For Student Affairs. *About Campus*, *3*(1), 10-15.

Bochner, A. P., & Riggs, N. A. (2014). Practicing narrative inquiry. *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*, 195-222.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2006). *Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Brooks, A. K., & Clunis, T. (2007). Where to now? Race and ethnicity in workplace learning and development research: 1980–2005. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *18*(2), 229-251.

Cabrera, A. F., Nora, A., Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E., & Hagedorn, L. S. (1999). Campus racial climate and the adjustment of students to college: A comparison between White students and African-American students. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *70*(2), 134-160.

Cabrera, N. L. (2014). Exposing Whiteness in higher education: White male college students minimizing racism, claiming victimization, and recreating White supremacy. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *17*(1), 30-55.

Cabrera, N. L., Franklin, J. D., & Watson, J. S. (2016). Whiteness in higher education: The invisible missing link in diversity and racial analyses. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, *42*(6), 7-125.

Cabrera, N. L., Watson, J. S., & Franklin, J. D. (2016). Racial arrested development: A critical whiteness analysis of the campus ecology. *Journal of College Student Development*, *57*(2), 119-134.

Calhoun, D. W., & Taub, D. J. (2014). Mentor relationships for entry-level men in student affairs. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, *51*(2), 183-194.

Carbado, D. W., & Gulati, M. (2013). *Acting white?: Rethinking race in post-racial America*. Oxford University Press.

Caye, J. M., Strack, R., Orlander, P., Kilmann, J., Espinosa, E. G., Francoeur, F., & Haen, P. (2010). Creating a new deal for middle managers. *Empowering a neglected but critical group, White Paper, Frankfurt/Main: Boston Consulting Group und World Federation of People Management Associations*.

Chang, M. J., Denson, N., Sáenz, V., & Misa, K. (2006). The educational benefits of sustaining cross-racial interaction among undergraduates. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *77*(3), 430-455.

Clandinin, D. (2013). Engaging in Narrative Inquiry. New York: Routledge

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Clayborne, H. L., & Hamrick, F. (2007). Rearticulating the leadership experiences of African American women in midlevel student affairs administration. *NASPA Journal*, *44*(1), 123-146.

Collins, P. H. (2000). Gender, black feminism, and black political economy. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *568*(1), 41-53.

Collins, P. H. (2002). *Black feminist thought: Knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment*. Routledge.

Constantine, M. G., & Sue, D. W. (2007). Perceptions of racial microaggressions among

    black supervisees in cross-racial dyads. *Journal of counseling psychology*, *54*(2),

    142.

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the margins: Identity politics, intersectionality, and

    violence against women. *Stanford Law Review*, *43*(6), 1241-1299.

Crenshaw, K. W., Gotanda, N., Peller, G., & Thomas, K. (Eds.). (1995). *Critical Race*

    Theory: The key writings that formed the movement. New York, NY: The New

    Press.

Croom, N., & Patton, L. (2011). The miner's canary: A critical race perspective on the

    representation of Black women full professors. *Negro Educational Review*, *62*(1-

    4), 13.

Crum, J., & Naff, K. C. (1997). Looking like America: The continuing importance of

    affirmative action in federal employment. *Public Productivity & Management*

    Review, 272-287.

Davis, T. J., & Cooper, D. L. (2017). "People are Messy": Complex Narratives of

    Supervising New Professionals in Student Affairs. *Journal of Student Affairs*

    Research and Practice, *54*(1), 55-68.

DeCuir, J. T., & Dixson, A. D. (2004). "So when it comes out, they aren't that surprised

    that it is there": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism

    in education. *Educational researcher*, *33*(5), 26-31.

Delgado, R. (1992). Derrick bell's racial realism: comment on white optimism and black

    despair. Connecticut Law Review, 24(2), 527-532.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2012). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. NYU Press.

Denzin, N. K. (1997). *Interpretive ethnography: Ethnographic practices for the 21st century*. Sage.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (1998). Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Detert, J. R., & Burris, E. R. (2007). Leadership behavior and employee voice: Is the door really open? *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(4), 869-884.

DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*. Beacon Press.

Diggles, K. (2014). Addressing racial awareness and color-blindness in higher education. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, *2014*(140), 31-44.

Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2004). Aversive racism. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology, Vol. 36*, (p. 1–52). https://doi.org/10.1016/S0065-2601(04)36001-6

Duguid, M. M., & Goncalo, J. A. (2015). Squeezed in the middle: The middle status trade creativity for focus. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, *109*(4), 589.

Ely, R. J. (1994). The effects of organizational demographics and social identity on relationships among professional women. *Administrative science quarterly*, 203-238.

Emily, J., & Jaramillo, C. (2019, October 14). Deaths of Atatiana Jefferson, Botham Jean show how police training emphasizes danger to cops over community. *The Dallas Morning News*. Retrieved from https://www.dallasnews.com/news/2019/10/15/deaths-of-atatiana-jefferson-botham-jean-show-how-police-training-emphasizes-danger-to-cops-over-community/

Fine, M. (1994). Working the hyphens: Reinventing self and other in qualitative research. In N.K. Denzin and Y.S. Lincoln (eds) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, pp. 70–82. London: Sage.

Flowers, L. A. (2003). Investigating the representation of African American student affairs administrators: A preliminary study. *Association of Student Affairs Professionals*, 6, 35-43.

Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the "burden of 'acting white'". *The urban review*, *18*(3), 176-206.

Freire, P. (2008). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury publishing USA.

Fries-Britt, S., & Snider, J. (2015). Mentoring outside the line: The importance of authenticity, transparency, and vulnerability in effective mentoring relationships. *New Directions for Higher Education*, *2015*(171), 3-11.

Garcia, G. A. (2016). Exploring student affairs professionals' experiences with the campus racial climate at a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *9*(1), 20.

Gaston Gayles, J., & Kelly, B. T. (2007). Experiences with diversity in the curriculum: Implications for graduate programs and student affairs practice. *NASPA Journal*, *44*(1), 193-208.

Gordon, C. (2019). *Race in the Heartland: Equity, Opportunity, and Public Policy in the Midwest*. University of Iowa and Iowa Policy Project.

Griffin, R. A., Ward, L., & Phillips, A. R. (2014). Still flies in buttermilk: Black male faculty, critical race theory, and composite counterstorytelling. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *27*(10), 1354-1375.

Gusa, D. L. (2010). White institutional presence: The impact of Whiteness on campus climate. *Harvard Educational Review*, *80*(4), 464-490.

Hamilton, C. Y. (2009). *The perceptions of African American administrators regarding their work experiences at predominantly White institutions of higher education*. University of North Florida. (Doctoral Dissertation).

Harper, S. R. (2012). Race without racism: How higher education researchers minimize racist institutional norms. *The Review of Higher Education*, *36*(1), 9-29.

Harper, S. R., & Hurtado, S. (2007). Nine themes in campus racial climates and implications for institutional transformation. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2007*(120), 7-24.

Harper, S. R., Patton, L. D., & Wooden, O. S. (2009). Access and equity for African American students in higher education: A critical race historical analysis of policy efforts. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *80*(4), 389-414.

Harper, S. R., Smith, E. J., & Davis, C. H. D. (2016). A Critical Race Case Analysis of Black Undergraduate Student Success at an Urban University. *Urban Education*, *1*, 23.

Harris, C. I. (1993). Whiteness as property. *Harvard law review*, 1707-1791.

Harris, J. C., & Linder, C. (2018). The racialized experiences of Students of Color in higher education and student affairs graduate preparation programs. *Journal of College Student Development*, *59*(2), 141-158.

Harro, B. (2013). The cycle of socialization. In M. Adams, W. Blumenfeld, R. Castañeda, H. Hackman, M. Peters & X. Zúñiga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice: An anthology on racism, antisemitism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and classism* (pp. 45-51). New York: Routledge.

Haynes, C. (2017). Dismantling the White Supremacy Embedded in Our Classrooms: White Faculty in Pursuit of More Equitable Educational Outcomes for Racially Minoritized Students. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, *29*(1), 87-107.

Haynes, C., & Bazner, K. J. (2019). A message for faculty from the present-day movement for black lives. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *32*(9), 1146-1161.

Heller, M. (1988). Strategic ambiguity: Codeswitching in the management of conflict. *Codeswitching: Anthropological and sociolinguistic perspectives*, 77-96.

Henry, W. J. (2010). African American women in student affairs: Best practices for winning the game. *Advancing Women in Leadership*, *30*.

Hernández, E. (2016). Utilizing critical race theory to examine race/ethnicity, racism, and power in student development theory and research. *Journal of College Student Development*, *57*(2), 168-180.

hooks, b. (1990). Marginality as a site of resistance. *Out there: Marginalization and contemporary cultures*, 341-343.

Hubain, B. S., Allen, E. L., Harris, J. C., & Linder, C. (2016). Counter-stories as representations of the racialized experiences of students of color in higher education and student affairs graduate preparation programs. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *29*(7), 946-963.

Hunter, D. E. (1992). How student affairs professionals choose their careers. *NASPA journal*, *29*(3), 181-188.

Jackson, J. F. (2003). Toward administrative diversity: An analysis of the African-American male educational pipeline. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, *12*(1), 43-60.

Jackson, J. F. (2004). Introduction: Engaging, retaining, and advancing African Americans in executive-level positions: A descriptive and trend analysis of academic administrators in higher and postsecondary education. *Journal of Negro Education*, 4-20.

Jackson, J. F., & Flowers, L. A. (2003). Retaining African American student affairs administrators: Voices from the field. *College Student Affairs Journal*, 22(2), 125.

Jackson, J. F., & Kile, K. S. (2004). Does a nexus exist between the work of

administrators and student outcomes in higher education?: An answer from a

systematic review of research. *Innovative Higher Education*, *28*(4), 285-301.

Jackson, J. F., & O'Callaghan, E. M. (2009). Special Issue: Ethnic and Racial

Administrative Diversity--Understanding Work Life Realities and Experiences in

Higher Education. *ASHE Higher Education Report*, *35*(3), 1-95.

Jacobs, S. (2016). The Use of Participatory Action Research within Education--Benefits

to Stakeholders. *World Journal of Education*, *6*(3), 48-55.

Jayakumar, U. M., Howard, T. C., Allen, W. R., & Han, J. C. (2009). Racial privilege in

the professoriate: An exploration of campus climate, retention, and

satisfaction. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *80*(5), 538-563.

Jones, S. R., Torres, V., & Arminio, J. (2014). *Negotiating the complexities of

qualitative research in higher education: Fundamental elements and issues*.

Routledge.

Josselson, R. (2011). Narrative research: Constructing, deconstructing, and

reconstructing story. *Five ways of doing qualitative analysis: Phenomenological

psychology, grounded theory, discourse analysis, narrative research, and

intuitive inquiry*, 224-242.

Keltner, D., Gruenfeld, D. H., & Anderson, C. (2003). Power, approach, and

inhibition. *Psychological review*, *110*(2), 265.

Kezar, A. (2016). Organization Theory and Change. In Schuh, J., Jones, S., Torres, V.

(eds.) *Student services: A handbook for the profession*. Jossey-Bass.

Kile, K., & Jackson, J. F. L. (2009). Administrative work in higher and postsecondary

   education: A critical review of empirical research. *Annuals of the Next*

   Generation, 2(1), 64–83

Kim, J. (2016). *Understanding narrative inquiry: The Crafting and Analysis of Stories*

   as Research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice

   field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*,

   11, 7-24.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2013). Critical race theory—What it is not!. In *Handbook of*

   critical race theory in education (pp. 54-67). Routledge.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a Critical Race Theory of education.

   Teachers College Record, 97, 47-68.

Ledesma, M. C., & Calderón, D. (2015). Critical race theory in education a review of

   past literature and a look to the future. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *21*(3), 206-222.

Leonardo, Z. (2004). The color of supremacy: Beyond the discourse of 'white

   privilege'. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *36*(2), 137-152.

Leonardo, Z. (2009). *Race, whiteness, and education*. Routledge.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage

   Publications.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2013). *The constructivist credo*. Left Coast Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E. G. (2018). Paradigmatic Controversies,

   Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences, Revisited. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S.

Lincoln (Eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*. (pp. 108-150).
Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Linder, C., Harris, J. C., Allen, E. L., & Hubain, B. (2015). Building inclusive pedagogy:
Recommendations from a national study of students of color in higher education
and student affairs graduate programs. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *48*(2),
178-194.

Lipsitz, G. (2006). *The possessive investment in whiteness: How white people profit from
identity politics*. Temple University Press.

Lipsitz, G. (2007). The racialization of space and the spatialization of race theorizing the
hidden architecture of landscape. *Landscape Journal*, *26*(1), 10-23.

Lipsitz, G. (2011). *How racism takes place*. Temple University Press.

Magolda, M. B. B. (2008). Three elements of self-authorship. *Journal of college student
development*, *49*(4), 269-284.

Mather, P. C., Bryan, S. P., & Faulkner, W. O. (2009). Orienting Mid-Level Student
Affairs Professionals. *College Student Affairs Journal*, *27*(2), 242-256.

McClellan, G. S. (2012, October 25). Moving to the middle. *The Chronicle of Higher
Education*.

McDonald, M. L., Keeves, G. D., & Westphal, J. D. (2018). One step forward, one step
back: White male top manager organizational identification and helping behavior
toward other executives following the appointment of a female or racial minority
CEO. *Academy of Management Journal*, *61*(2), 405-439.

205

Mertens, D. M. (2014). *Research and evaluation in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. Sage publications.

Miller, S. A. (2016). Easier said than done: Practicing self-care and health and wellness in higher education and student affairs. *The Vermont Connection*, *37*(1), 13.

Mills, D. B. (2009). Middle managers: Roles and responsibilities spanning the student affairs career. In G.S. McClellan & J. Stringer (Eds.), *The Handbook of Student Affairs Administration (Sponsored by NASPA, Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education). (*3rd ed., pp. 355-370). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Milner, H. R. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational researcher*, *36*(7), 388-400.

Molinsky, A. (2007). Cross-cultural code-switching: The psychological challenges of adapting behavior in foreign cultural interactions. *Academy of Management Review*, *32*(2), 622-640.

Moore, W. L., & Bell, J. M. (2011). Maneuvers of whiteness: 'Diversity' as a mechanism of retrenchment in the affirmative action discourse. *Critical Sociology*, *37*(5), 597-613.

Moore, W. L., & Bell, J. M. (2017). The right to be racist in college: Racist speech, white institutional space, and the First Amendment. *Law & Policy*, *39*(2), 99-120.

Morrison, E. W., Wheeler-Smith, S. L., & Kamdar, D. (2011). Speaking up in groups: A
cross-level study of group voice climate and voice. *Journal of Applied
Psychology*, 96, 183-191.

Ng, J. C., Lee, S. S., & Pak, Y. K. (2007). Chapter 4 contesting the model minority and
perpetual foreigner stereotypes: A critical review of literature on Asian
Americans in education. *Review of research in education*, *31*(1), 95-130.

Nguyen, C., & Duran, L. (2018). Performing and Deconstructing Whiteness in Student
Affairs. *The Vermont Connection*, *39*(1), 17.

Obach, B. K. (1999). Demonstrating the social construction of race. *Teaching
Sociology*, *27*(3), 252-257.

Ogbu, J. U. (2004). Collective identity and the burden of "acting White" in Black
history, community, and education. *The Urban Review*, *36*(1), 1-35.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2015). *Racial formation in the United States*. Routledge.

Parker, P. S. (2004). Race, gender, and leadership: Re-envisioning organizational
leadership from the perspectives of African American women executives.
Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Patel, L. (2015). *Decolonizing educational research: From ownership to answerability*.
New York, NY: Routledge.

Patton, L. D. (2016). Disrupting postsecondary prose toward a critical race theory of
higher education. *Urban Education*, 51(3), 315-342. doi: 0042085915602542.

Patton, L. D., & Bondi, S. (2015). Nice white men or social justice allies?: Using critical

  race theory to examine how white male faculty and administrators engage in ally

  work. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *18*(4), 488-514.

Patton, L. D., & Catching, C. (2009). 'Teaching while Black': Narratives of African

  American student affairs faculty. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in*

  Education, *22*(6), 713-728.

Patton, L. D., Haynes, C. M., Harris, J. C., & Ivery, S. M. (2014). Perhaps the field of

  education isn't so nice after all: An examination of critical race theory in higher

  education. *National Association of Student Affairs Professionals Journal,* 15(2),

  135-148.

Patton, L. D., McEwen, M., Rendón, L., & Howard-Hamilton, M. F. (2007). Critical

  race perspectives on theory in student affairs. *New Directions for Student*

  Services, *2007*(120), 39-53.

Patton, L. D., Sánchez, B., Mac, J., & Stewart, D. L. (2019). An inconvenient truth

  about" progress": An analysis of the promises and perils of research on campus

  diversity initiatives. *The Review of Higher Education*, *42*(5), 173-198.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal,

  experiential perspective. *Qualitative social work*, *1*(3), 261-283.

Pettigrew, T. F. (1998). Intergroup contact theory. *Annual review of psychology*, *49*(1),

  65-85.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1995). Narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. *International*

  journal of qualitative studies in education, *8*(1), 5-23.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (2007). Validity issues in narrative research. *Qualitative inquiry*, *13*(4), 471-486.

Pope, R. L., Mueller, J. A., & Reynolds, A. L. (2009). Looking back and moving forward: Future directions for diversity research in student affairs. *Journal of College Student Development*, *50*(6), 640-658.

Pope, R. L., Reynolds, A. L., & Mueller, J. A. (2019). "A Change Is Gonna Come": Paradigm Shifts to Dismantle Oppressive Structures. *Journal of College Student Development*, *60*(6), 659-673.

Pritchard, A., & McChesney, J. (2018). Focus on Student Affairs, 2018: Understanding Key Challenges Using CUPA-HR Data. *College and University Professional Association for Human Resources*.

Quaye, S. J., Aho, R. E., Jacob, M. B., Domingue, A. D., Guido, F. M., Lange, A. C., Squire, D., & Stewart, D-L. (2019). *A bold vision forward: A framework for the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization*. Retrieved from: http://www.myacpa.org/sites/default/files/SIRJD_GuidingDoc2.pdf

Ray, V. (2019). A theory of racialized organizations. *American Sociological Review*, *84*(1), 26-53.

Renn, K. A., & Jessup-Anger, E. R. (2008). Preparing new professionals: Lessons for graduate preparation programs from the national study of new professionals in student affairs. *Journal of College Student Development*, *49*(4), 319-335.

Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis* (Vol. 30). Sage.

Riessman, C. K. (2008). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. Sage.

Rivera, D. P., Forquer, E. E., & Rangel, R. (2010). Microaggressions and the life

    experience of Latina/o Americans. *Microaggressions and marginality:*

    Manifestation, dynamics, and impact, 59-83.

Rosser, V. J. (2000). Midlevel Administrators: What We Know. *New Directions for*

    Higher Education, *111*, 5-13.

Rosser, V. J. (2004). A national study on midlevel leaders in higher education: The

    unsung professionals in the academy. *Higher Education*, *48*(3), 317-337.

Rosser, V. J., & Javinar, J. M. (2003). Midlevel student affairs leaders' intentions to

    leave: Examining the quality of their professional and institutional work life.

    Journal of College Student Development, 44(6), 813-830.

Rudolph, F. (1990). *The American college and university: A history*. University of

    Georgia Press.

Sáenz, V. B., Ngai, H. N., & Hurtado, S. (2007). Factors influencing positive

    interactions across race for African American, Asian American, Latino, and

    White college students. *Research in Higher Education*, *48*(1), 1-38.

Sagana, M. A., & Johnsrud, L. K. (1991). Recruiting, Advancing, and Retaining

    Minorities in Student Affairs: Moving from Rhetoric to Results. *NASPA*

    Journal, 28(2), 105-120.

Schaerer, M., du Plessis, C., Yap, A. J., & Thau, S. (2018). Low power individuals in

    social power research: A quantitative review, theoretical framework, and

    empirical test. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 149,

    73-96.

Schaerer, M., Lee, A. J., Galinsky, A. D., & Thau, S. (2018). Contextualizing social

    power research within organizational behavior. In Ferris, D. L., Johnson, R. E., &

    Sedikides, C. (Eds.). *The self at work: Fundamental theory and research.*

    Organizational Frontiers Series of the Society for Industrial and Organizational

    Psychology. New York: Routledge.

Schuh, J. H., Jones, S. R., & Torres, V. (2016). *Student Services: A Handbook for the*

    Profession. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Schwartz, R. A., & Stewart, D.-L. (2017). The history of student affairs. In J. H. Schuh,

    S. R. Jones, & V. Torres (Eds.), *Student services: A handbook for the profession*

    (6th ed.; pp. 20-38). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Serpa, S., Ferreira, C. M., Santos, A. I., & Teixeira, R. (2018). Participatory action

    research in higher education training. *International Journal of Social Science*

    Studies, *6(6)*, 1-7.

Silva, S. (2003). *A Culture of Success: An examination of the life experiences and*

    professional challenges of Mexican American female academic and student

    affairs administrators at four institutions in the University of Texas

    System (Doctoral dissertation).

Solórzano, D. G. (1998). Critical race theory, race and gender microaggressions, and the

    experience of Chicana and Chicano scholars. *International journal of qualitative*

    studies in education, *11*(1), 121-136.

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative inquiry*, *8*(1), 23-44.

Squire, D. (2015). Engaging race and power in higher education organizations through a critical race institutional logics perspective. *Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs*, *2*(1), 8.

Squire, D. D., & Nicolazzo, Z. (2019). Love my naps, but stay woke: The case against self-care. *About Campus*, *24*(2), 4-11.

Stanley, C. A. (2006). Coloring the academic landscape: Faculty of color breaking the silence in predominantly White colleges and universities. *American educational research journal*, *43*(4), 701-736.

Stanley, C. A. (2007). When counter narratives meet master narratives in the journal editorial-review process. *Educational Researcher*, *36*(1), 14-24.

Stanley, C. A., & Slattery, P. (2003). Who reveals what to whom? Critical reflections on conducting qualitative inquiry as an interdisciplinary, biracial, male/female research team. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *9*(5), 705-728.

Stanley, C. A., Porter, M. E., Simpson, N. J., & Ouellett, M. L. (2003). A case study of the teaching experiences of African American faculty at two predominantly White research universities. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, *14*(1), 151-178.

Sue, D. W., & Constantine, M. G. (2007). Racial microaggressions as instigators of

difficult dialogues on race: Implications for student affairs educators and

students. *College Student Affairs Journal*, *26*(2), 136-143.

Taub, D. J., & McEwen, M. K. (2006). Decision to enter the profession of student

affairs. *Journal of College Student Development*, *47*(2), 206-216.

Thelin, J. R. (2011). *A history of American higher education*. JHU Press.

Thompson, A. (2003). Tiffany, friend of people of color: White investments in

antiracism. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(1), 7-

29. doi:10.1080/0951839032000033509

Tierney, W. (1997). Lost in translation. In Tierney, W. and Lincoln, Y. (Eds),

Representation and the Text: Reframing the Narrative Voice (pp. 23-36). SUNY

Press: Albany, NY.

Truong, K. A., McMickens, T. L., & Brown, R. E. (2015). At the Intersections of Race

and Class: An Autoethnographic Study on the Experiences of a Southeast Asian

American College Student. *College Students' Experiences of Power and

Marginality: Sharing Spaces and Negotiating Differences*, 11-28.

Turner, C., & Grauerholz, L. (2017). Introducing the Invisible Man: Black Male

Professionals in Higher Education. *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, 39,

212-227.

Tyrell, S. (2014). Creating and implementing practices that promote and support quality

student affairs professionals. *New Directions for Community

Colleges*, *2014*(166), 63-77.

White-Davis, T., Stein, E., & Karasz, A. (2016). The elephant in the room: Dialogues about race within cross-cultural supervisory relationships. *The International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine*, *51*(4), 347-356.

Wilder, C. S. (2013). *Ebony and ivy: Race, slavery, and the troubled history of America's universities*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

Wolfe, B., & Freeman, S. (2013). A case for administrators of color: Insights and policy implications for higher education's predominantly white institutions. *JEP: eJournal of Education Policy*.

Yen, H. (2013). Census: White majority in US gone by 2043. *USNews. nbcnews.com. Published*.

Young, R. B. (1990). *The Invisible Leaders: Student Affairs Mid-Managers*. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. Washington, DC.

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD OUTCOME LETTER

ĀĪM | TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY

APPROVAL OF RESEARCH
Using Expedited Procedures
(Common Rule – Effective January 2018)

June 28, 2019

Type of Review:	Submission Response for Initial Review Submission Form
Title:	A Narrative Inquiry Exploring the Experiences of Racially and Ethnically Minoritized Mid-Level Student Affairs Administrators at Predominantly White Institutions
Investigator:	Christine Stanley
IRB ID:	IRB2019-0612
Reference Number:	092938
Funding:	Internal
Documents Approved: *copies of stamped approved documents are downloadable from IRIS	• Consent Form 1.1 (English) - (Version 1.1.1) • Initial Social Media Post 1.1 - (Version 11.0) • Initial Recruitment Email 1.1 - (Version 11.0) • Protocol Questions - (Version 1.0)
Special Determinations:	Written consent in accordance with 45 CF 46.116/ 21 CFR 50.27
Risk Level of Study:	Not Greater than Minimal Risk under 45 CFR 46 / 21 CFR 56
Review Category:	Category 7: Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

Dear Christine Stanley:

The IRB approved this research on 06/28/2019.

Before 05/27/2020, you are to submit an Administrative Check-In Form to the HRPP/IRB. If the HRPP/IRB does not receive the form, there will be no approval of new research after 06/27/2020.

In conducting this research, you are reminded of the following requirements:

- You must follow the approved protocol;
- Any changes to the research must be submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to implementation;

- Unanticipated problems or other reportable events (including protocol deviations) as described in SOP HRP-029 must be reported to the IRB within 5 working days of learning about the incident;
- You must notify the IRB of study completion.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Administrative Office at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636.

Sincerely,
IRB Administration

INITIAL RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Email Subject Line: A research opportunity to share YOUR student affairs experiences

Hello,

My name is Kevin Bazner and I am a Ph.D. candidate at Texas A&M University in higher education administration. I am conducting a national study to explore the professional experiences of mid-level student affairs administrators among racially/ethnically diverse professionals employed at predominantly white institutions in the United States.

I am looking for professionals who meet the following criteria for this research study:
- Identify as a racially/ethnically diverse person (i.e. Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Bi/Multiracial, etc.);
- Work at predominantly white institution (i.e. an institution where white students hold the largest numerical majority of any racial identity on campus);
- Are currently a mid-level student affairs administrators, which includes:
  - Reporting to a senior-level administrator (e.g. VP, AVP, or Dean of Students)
  - Supervises at least one full-time professional staff (i.e. non-graduate/student assistant or administrative professional);
  - Been in your current mid-level role for at least 2 years

Participants will be asked to take part in a series of 3 interviews that will take about 60-90 minutes each.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please email ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ or call ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. Feel free to contact me with any questions regarding this study. Individuals are also encouraged to use their personal email or telephone to protect individual privacy.

If you are not able to participate but know someone who might be interested, I hope you will forward this message to them. Thank you in advance for your consideration, time, referrals, and support!

Sincerely,

Kevin J. Bazner

This research has been reviewed according to the Texas A&M University IRB procedures for research involving human subjects. TAMU IRB# 2019-0612 Approved: 06/28/2019
IRB NUMBER: IRB2019-0612 IRB APPROVAL DATE: 06/28/2019

SOCIAL MEDIA POST

[GRAPHIC TEXT]

Are you a mid-level student affairs administrator?   Do you work at a PWI?
        Do you self-identify as Person of Color or racially/ethnically minoritized?
Then, please consider participating in this study Exploring the Experiences of Racially and Ethnically Minoritized Mid-Level Student Affairs Administrators at Predominantly White Institutions
I am looking for professionals who meet the following criteria for this research study:
- Identify as a person of color or racially/ethnically minoritized;
- Work at predominantly white institution;
- Are currently a mid-level student affairs administrators, which includes:
    - Reporting to a senior-level administrator (e.g. VP, AVP, or Dean of Students)
    - Supervises at least one full-time professional staff
    - Been in your current mid-level role for at least 2 years

Participants will be asked to take part in a series of 3 interviews that will take about 60-90 minutes each.
Interested individuals are welcome to email me at ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ with any questions of to express interest in this study. Individuals are also encouraged to use their personal email or telephone to protect individual privacy. Thank you!

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Research Study: A Narrative Inquiry Exploring the Experiences of Racially and Ethnically Minoritized Mid-Level Student Affairs Administrators at Predominantly White Institutions

Investigator: Christine Stanley, Ph.D.

Supported By: This research is supported by Texas A&M University.

Why are you being invited to take part in a research study?
You are being asked to participate because you are:
- A mid-level student affairs administrator who supervised at least one full-time professional staff (i.e. non-graduate/student assistant or administrative professional);
- Identify as a racially/ethnically diverse person (i.e. Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Bi/Multiracial, etc.);
- Work at predominantly white institution (i.e. an institution where white students hold the largest numerical majority of any racial identity on campus);
- And have been in your current mid-level role for at least 2 years.

What should you know about a research study?
- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Who can I talk to?
If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to the research team:

Kevin J. Bazner
546 Harrington Tower, 4226 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843
kbazner@tamu.edu

███████████

Christine A. Stanley
560 Harrington Tower, 4226 TAMU
College Station, Texas 77843
cstanley@tamu.edu
979-845-2716

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Texas A&M Institutional Review Board (IRB). You may talk to them at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636, or by email at

Document Version: 1.0

IRB NUMBER: IRB2019-0812
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 06/28/2019

of 3   Page 1

219

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

irb@tamu.edu, if
- You cannot reach the research team.
- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Why is this research being done?
The purpose of this research study is to document and understand the experience of racially/ethnically minoritized mid-level student affairs administrators working at predominantly white institutions. Findings from this study will help to inform inclusive student affairs leadership practices and draw implications for student affairs professional practice, graduate preparation programs, and professional development.

How long will the research last?
The procedures for this study involve participating in three 60-90 minutes interviews completed over a period of 1-2 months.

How many people will be studied?
We expect to enroll about 6-12 people in this research study.

What happens if I say "Yes, I want to be in this research"?
- Individuals involved in this study will participate in three interviews that focus on your professional career and work history, understanding your work experience as a mid-level student affairs administrator, and reflections of your experiences.
- Interviews will be conducted by Kevin J. Bazner (in-person or online) and will last approximately 60-90 minutes in length scheduled over a period of 1-2 months.
- Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed with the use of pseudonyms for the participant's name and places of employment.
- Any loss of confidentiality will be minimized by storing data on a password protected computer.
- Data will only be access by members of the research team and individual identifiers will be destroyed when this research has been completed.

What happens if I do not want to be in this research?
You can choose not to participate in this research and it will not be held against you.

What happens if I say "Yes", but I change my mind later?
You can leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you. Any personal information, including interview recordings and transcriptions will be destroyed and not utilized in this research study.

Is there any way being in this study could be bad for me?
This may be some risks from participating in this research study. You may experience some discomfort in sharing personal stories during the interviews, but may choose to stop participant at any time without penalty or skip question you are uncomfortable answering.

Document Version: 1.1

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Will being in this study help me in any way?
There are no direct benefits from participating in this research.

What happens to the information collected for the research?
Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study and other records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete privacy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the TAMU HRPP/IRB and other representatives of this institution. Study records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law.

- Following the interviews, participants will be provided with a copy of the interview transcripts for review which may be edited or to remove information participants are not comfortable sharing.
- Audio recordings will be destroyed following a review of the transcribed interviews.

Optional Elements:
The following research activities are optional, meaning that you do not have to agree to them in order to participate in the research study. Please indicate your willingness to participate in these optional activities by placing your initials next to each activity.

I agree   I disagree

_____ _____   The researcher may audio or video record me to aid with data analysis. The researcher will not share these recordings with anyone outside of the immediate study team or TAMU Compliance.

Your signature documents your permission to take part in this research.

_____   _____
Signature of participant   Date

_____
Printed name of participant

_____   _____
Signature of person obtaining consent   Date

_____
Printed name of person obtaining consent

IRB NUMBER: IRB2019-0612
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 06/28/2019

APPENDIX E

OPEN LETTER TO MY POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS

An Open Letter to My Potential Participants,

Thank you for your interest in my dissertation research study: *A Narrative Inquiry Exploring the Experiences of Racially and Ethnically Minoritized Mid-Level Student Affairs Administrators at Predominantly White Institutions.* I do not take the responsibilities I have placed on myself with this project and among my participants lightly. Partnership and transparency are important qualities of how I approach this research, so in acknowledging my own identities as a researcher, I would like to share a little about myself and why I chose to engage in this project.

I come to this study heavily influenced by my own professional student affairs experiences as a mid-level administrator supervised by a Black woman and who has supervised students and other racially/ethnically minoritized professionals over my professional career. My experiences working in student affairs with diverse student, faculty, and staff populations shaped my understanding and advocacy for minoritized populations, across identities. My specific experiences of interacting with racially/ethnically minoritized student affairs administrators and having a Black woman supervisor for the last seven years of my student affairs practitioner career ultimately led to my interest in conducting qualitative research to learn more about the experiences of racially/ethnically minoritized student affairs administrators. Through conversations with racially/ethnically minoritized students, faculty, and staff at PWIs, I heard stories in which individuals shared experiences with racism, prejudice, and frustration navigating institutions that did not reflect their identities or validated their existence.

My scholarship and research focuses on centering historically marginalized voices and forefronting a challenge to systemic cycles of oppression. As a researcher with two dominant social identities (white man), I am explicit in acknowledging those aspects of my identity and how my privilege and experiences have shaped who I am as an individual and as a researcher. While I also identify as a gay man, as a white man, I realize I have the ability to navigate the world and much of society from a place of privilege. That privilege also has informed a degree of ignorance on the intersections of oppression and experiences individuals with minoritized identities and backgrounds may have in navigating their own lives.

Scholars caution the ease for white people to seek out validation from racially/ethnically minoritized folks for being "nice" or playing an ally at the individual level without addressing larger systemic issues or seeking to engage a larger audience (e.g. whites) about racism and discrimination. I hope to use this research to engage the

larger student affairs audience and become a deeper accomplice in the work of antiracism.

While I consider myself an advocate for social justice and antiracism work, I acknowledge I still have large gaps in my knowledge and personal experience. I also acknowledge that even as I commit myself to this research project, I still directly and indirectly benefit from the privilege of being a white man and by extension a white man conducting this research. I continue find myself having an ongoing internal dialogue that asks, "What is my role as a white researcher studying the experiences of racially minoritized administrators?" and "In the end, who will benefit from this research?" While I do not think I have a correct answer, an attempt to make these conversations more explicit with my potential research participants is the motivation for the transparency in this letter.

I hope I have been able to answer some questions and potentially even raised some new ones. If you are interested in continuing with me in this study, I invite you to review the additional study-related information and encourage you to ask any questions or raise any concerns you may have.

Thank you,

Kevin J. Bazner, M.S.
Ph.D. Candidate – Higher Education Administration
Texas A&M University

APPENDIX F

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD ADDENDUM OUTCOME LETTER

ĀĪM | TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY

APPROVAL
MODIFICATION OF PROTOCOL
Using Expedited Procedures

November 12, 2019

Type of Review:	Submission Response for IRB Amendment
Title:	A Narrative Inquiry Exploring the Experiences of Racially and Ethnically Minoritized Mid-Level Student Affairs Administrators at Predominantly White Institutions
Investigator:	Christine Stanley
IRB ID:	IRB2019-0612D
Reference Number:	100404
Funding:	Internal
Documents Approved: *copies of stamped approved documents are downloadable from IRIS	• Charitable Donation and Thank You Email - (Version 1.1)
Special Determinations:	Written documentation of consent in accordance with 45 CF 46.116/ 21 CFR 50.27
Risk Level of Study:	Not Greater than Minimal Risk under 45 CFR 46 / 21 CFR 56
Review Category:	Category 7: Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

Dear Christine Stanley:

On 11/12/2019 the IRB approved the modification(s) described below:

- Retroactive compensation to participants who completed the study in the form of a one-time donation of $35 to a charitable organization of the participant's choosing.
- Email to inform participants and facilitate the donation process.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRB Administrative Office at 1-979-458-4067, toll free at 1-855-795-8636.

Sincerely,
IRB Administration

APPENDIX G

CHARITABLE DONATION AND THANK YOU EMAIL

Email Subject Line: Thank you for your time and participation

Dear [Participant Name],

Thank you again for taking the time to share your experiences and your story with me for the project.

During the course of this project, a number of the participants have shared their passion and commitment for several different community organizations or professional associations. I do know your time is valuable and a small thank you your participation, I would like to make a donation of $35 in your name to a charity or community organization of your choice.

While my hope your story and the findings from this study will have a larger long-term impact on student affairs work, I hope this gesture can make a direct and immediate impact on a cause near to your heart.

To facilitate the donation, I ask that you reply to this email with the information request below. All responses will be kept confidential and any identifiable information will be kept separate from any study-related published information.
    Charitable Nonprofit Organization:
    Website or donation link:
    Name, as you wish it to appear on the donation:
    Contact Information for acknowledgment of gift (Name, Mailing Address, and Email):
    Any special comments or information to include on the donation:

Please reach out if you have any additional questions.
Sincerely,

Kevin J. Bazner

This research has been reviewed according to the Texas A&M University IRB procedures for research involving human subjects. TAMU IRB2019-0612D IRB APPROVAL DATE: 11/12/2019

APPENDIX H

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC FORM

If you wish to fill out this form, please answer the questions below (*you do not have to answer every question if you do not feel comfortable doing do; this will simply help better understand your experience through the lens of your identities*).

Pseudonym: _____
      (This will be used to identify you in all study-related documents)

Current student affairs functional area(s): _____

What is your current position title? _____

How long have you been in your current position? _____

What is your current supervisor's position title? _____

How many full-time professional staff do you currently supervise? _____

Institution Type:
_____

Age: _____   Race/Ethnicity: _____

Gender: _____   Gender Pronouns: _____

Sexual Orientation: _____

Any Additional Salient Identities (e.g. first-generation, English-Language Learner, etc.):

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Here are the projected interview questions for the three interviews proposed for this study. The "grand tour question" (Spradley, 1979) will be asked of every participant to describe their story as a mid-level student affairs administrator. The additional questions and prompts will be posed to guide the participants to specific experiences or topics.

Interview #1: Student Affairs Journey and History

Background

I would like you to tell me about your professional career and how you came into your current experience as a mid-level student affairs administrator. Feel free to talk about any experiences or event which were important to you or had an impact on your role as a mid-level administrator.

Please take the time you need, we have about 60 minutes. I'll listen first and won't interrupt.

I'll let you know if we are running out of our time. I'll take some notes for after you've finished telling me about your experience which have been important to you.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

As appropriate, the following prompts will be used:

1. Can you describe your professional and educational background and preparation toward your current administrative position? (RQ 1)
2. Tell me about the career decision that led to your current position? (RQ 1)
3. What experiences have shaped who you are personally and professionally? (RQ 1)
4. What are your salient social identities? How would you identify yourself? (RQ 1)
5. Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss that we may not have touched on? (RQ 1)

Thank you for your time today!

Interview #2: Work Experience in Context

This interview will focus on understanding your work experiences as a mid-level student affairs administrator. Similar to our first interview, feel free to talk about any experiences or events which were important to you or had an impact on your role as a mid-level administrator. Take the time you need, we have about 90 minutes for this interview. I'll listen first and may ask you to provide clarification or examples.

I'll let you know if we are running out of our time. I'll take some notes for after you've finished telling me about your experience which have been important to you.

Do you have any questions before we begin this interview?

1. Could you describe a "typical day" for you in your current position? (RQ 1)
2. How would you describe the organizational culture within student affairs? Within the greater university? (RQ 1)
3. How would you describe the expectations of mid-level student affairs administrators at this institution? Do you feel there are different expectations or pressures place upon you because of your race (or other identities)? (RQ 1, 2, 3)
4. Describe your interaction with administrators, supervisors, and other mid-level colleagues. (RQ 1, 2)
5. Describe your interactions with your supervisees and students. (RQ 1, 2)
6. What would you describe as challenges or obstacles to your experience as a mid-level student affairs administrator? Can you provide examples? (RQ 1, 3)
7. Have you ever felt any treatment from a supervisor that felt biased based on your identities? A supervisee? A student? If so, which identities? (RQ 1, 2)
   a. Have you ever experienced microaggressions from a supervisor? A supervisee? A student? If so, would you be willing to tell me about it? (RQ 1, 2)
   b. Have you ever experienced racism and/or discrimination in the workplace? If so, can you describe it? (RQ 1, 2)
8. Can you think of occasions when you felt you lacked influence with supervisors, supervisees, peers, students, etc. in some aspect of your position? Have you ever experienced a challenge from someone accepting your authority or background? (RQ 1, 2)
9. Is there anything else you would like to add or discuss that we may not have touched on? (RQ 1, 2)

Thank you for your time today!

Interview #3: Reflections of Experiences

This interview will focus more on expanding upon your experiences you shared in our first two conversations and ask you to describe how you understand your experiences.

We have about 90 minutes for this interview. Again, I'll listen first and will take some notes and may ask you to provide clarification or examples. I'll let you know if we are running out of our time.

Do you have any questions before we begin this interview?

1. Recalling the experience with race you previously shared, what does your racial identity mean to you currently? (RQ 1)
2. How do you understand the role your race plays in your interactions with others (i.e. administrators, other teachers, students, and parents)? (RQ 1, 2)
3. What impact, if any, do you believe your race, gender, or other identities have had on your work experience and interacting with others (i.e. administrators, supervisors, supervisees, students)? (RQ 2)
4. Recalling the experience with race and racism you shared in previous interviews, Can you recall ever directly addressing any of those instances with individuals? If so, can you describe how it went? (RQ 1, 2, 3)
5. Is there anything that you regret not advocating for or doing because you felt limited? If so, could you tell me more? (RQ 2, 3)
6. Do you feel there is anything within the institutional context that prevents you from doing or achieving more as an individual? Can you explain? (RQ 1, 3)
7. Do you feel there is anything within student affairs work or this institutional context that disrupts racism or marginalization? Can you explain? (RQ 3)
8. What expectations do you have for your supervisor(s) in addressing racism and marginalization in student affairs and higher education? Supervisees? Students? (RQ 3)
9. Do you have any other thoughts about racism in student affairs? (RQ 1, 2, 3)
10. Have you ever had an interview with a white person where you were asked specifically about your experiences related to race and racism? How does that make you feel? (RQ 3)
11. Is there anything that I did not ask that you would like to share to help me understand your experience as a mid-level student affairs professional? (RQ 1, 2, 3)

Thank you for your time today!

IRB NUMBER: IRB2019-0612 IRB APPROVAL DATE: 06/28/2019

APPENDIX J

MEMBER CHECK EMAIL

Hello,

I hope you are doing well. I wanted to provide you with an update on the progress for the study, *A Narrative Inquiry Exploring the Experiences of Racially and Ethnically Minoritized Mid-Level Student Affairs Administrators at Predominantly White Institutions,* which you are a participant

First, let me extend a heartfelt thank you for taking time out of your busy lives and sharing with me your story. I have spent the last few weeks reviewing your interviews and transcribing to share with you for review. Thank you for your vulnerability and trust you have in sharing your story and experiences for this study.

Attached you will find copies of verbatim transcripts from both the first and second interview we have conducted. I have also attached a copy of a blank informed consent document, for your reference. These transcripts are provided as part of the research process for your review and written feedback. I am not asking you to edit for grammar or formatting, but review for content and to refresh yourself on what we have already discussed. If you have any edits or information you wish to remove, please return a saved copy of your transcript using "track changes" by the end of the first week of October (10/4).

I will send a separate email with a request to schedule our third and final interview during the month of October. Again, I thank you for your time and willingness to share your experience. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out via email or phone ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

Sincerely,

Kevin

--
Kevin J. Bazner, M.S. | he/him/his
Graduate Research Assistant
Ph.D. Candidate in Higher Education Administration
College of Education & Human Development

- -
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY | FEARLESS on Every Front