DISSERTATION

WE ARE NOT THE SAME: THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WOMEN

MULTICULTURAL DIRECTORS AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

WE ARE NOT THE SAME: THE EXPERIENCES OF BLACK WOMEN

MULTICULTURAL DIRECTORS AT PREDOMINANTLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

Although Black Women make up the largest group of racially minoritized administrators in the field of higher education (West, 2020), and are overwhelmingly employed in diversity related mid-level positions (i.e., Multicultural Directors), we know very little about their personal experiences in these roles. Unlike other colleagues who may be able to separate their work lives from their personal lives, Black Women Multicultural Directors exist in the inescapable position of having an everyday experience of the professional being personal. This qualitative study used Black Feminist Thought and Sista Circle Methodology (SCM) to explore and illuminate the lived experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs). Research themes were surmised under three theoretical constructs: (1) The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Role, (2) To Be a Black Woman Multicultural Director, and (3), The Secrets Behind Black Girl Magic that underscored four major implications:(1) Black Women Multicultural Directors experience a nuanced form of isolation in their roles, (2) Black Women Multicultural Directors who work at PWIs are doing work above and beyond their job descriptions in climates that continue to be oppressive, (3) Black Women did not feel comfortable bringing their "authentic selves" to the workplace, and (4) Black Women were not afraid to leave their institutions when departure was necessitated. The implications of this study highlight the need for PWIs to set Black Women Multicultural Directors up for success at PWIs by: providing them adequate resources and institutional support, being clear in their definition

and expectation of Multicultural Directors, and working to change the campus climate to one that acknowledges DEI as the work of the campus, not just the Multicultural Office. To quote one of my sista colleagues who participated in the study, "I hope that by sharing our stories some aspiring Black Woman Multicultural Director can feel comfortable in their own truth and powerful in the role from the very beginning."

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This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Vertis and Bobbie Love who have always

encouraged my educational goals and have supported me every step along the way.

I love you.

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THE PROLOGUE

In her dissertation regarding the experiences of Black Women administrators at PWIs, Sobers (2014) wrote, "the academy needs to know what it is like for a woman of color working in today's colleges and universities" (p. 166). I couldn't agree more. After experiencing a horrible situation in my role as a Multicultural Director in which I was the target of death threats and other racist and sexist abuse, I made the decision to leave the institution in order to heal and determine next steps. During that time (which also coincided with the second year of my doctoral journey), I relied heavily on the lyrics, writings, and artistry of Black Women. Their voices and talents helped me to express what so many cannot begin to comprehend- the experience of being a Black Woman in the United States. These symbols of Black Women's culture (Collins, 1986) are the balm that continue to provide healing as I continue to grow into myself; reflecting upon the Black girl I was, the Black Woman I have been, and the Black Woman I will become. It is in this respect that I decided to use select poetry, song lyrics, addendums, and letters to represent the five women who participated in this study and their experiences. Flicker et al. (2014) note the use of art in research creates accessibility, and unearths the stories of those who have often been unheard or whose stories have been erased. In this study, I use the power of art to heal, provoke, evoke meaning and stimulate change (Bochner & Ellis, 2003). Chapter 1 begins with an original poem designed to ground the reader in the experience of being a Black Woman Multicultural Director at a PWI. I also use lyrics later in the chapter to help describe my position on language. In chapter 3, lyrics are used at the beginning of the chapter to assist in framing the methodological decisions. In chapter 4, I use lyrics chosen by the women in the study both to introduce them to the reader and to help the reader understand what it feels like to be us in these

roles. This chapter also includes an addendum to the Multicultural Director job description to highlight the "Other Duties as Assigned" for Black Women Multicultural Directors. Chapter 5 opens with a letter drawn directly from the data and addressed to a Black Woman who has applied for a Multicultural Director position at a PWI. The subsequent playlist at the end of the chapter once again encourages the reader to literally listen as (mostly) Black Women singers artistically express our joys and challenges while (hopefully) evoking emotions that encourage the reader to interrogate their personal interactions and professional practices with Black Women Multicultural Directors at their institutions.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Tell your story Rashida
Tell our story Rashida
How they come for us
How we rise
How they underestimate us
How they dismiss us
How they throw us to the wolves
And how we still find a way to make it happen

I need to tell you, Black Woman who wants next in this space,
Read the fine print
"other duties ~~traumas~~ as assigned"
…
Attn: Well-meaning Supervisors and Colleagues:

You and I have completely different work lives (we are not the same)
We give of ourselves in ways you couldn't even imagine (although we wouldn't know it by your
significantly higher pay rate)
Black Women are full of stories of how it feels to be us in these roles

Sometimes we are scared
Sometimes we cry

She's strong, you say (But I'm not always)
She's got it, you think (But I don't always)
But I'm a Black Woman and we've both been socialized to believe I am a superwoman

Sometimes we are "them" (the students you want us to control)
They share their stories, their lives with me
I hold space
I center
And I help them to navigate systems that seem to deny me at every turn

To be honest, most days I feel like I have more in common with them than you anyways
Because they go home and relive the injustices of the day too…do you?

The institution is all about social justice
Until I actually do something that's socially just
Center the lived experience of BIPOC (then I'm a "reverse racist")
Ask allies to participate in a more meaningful way (then I hate white people)
And you're nowhere to be found when they come with their torches

Meanwhile you tell me
"Something happened on campus with the Black/Brown/LGTBQ students today"
You know how to fix it right?
Yeah, you know all the things
"Oh, you don't know how to heal all the pain we caused?"
And just like that, you have no more use for me

And at the same time…
Sandra
Breonna
…

I need to tell you, Black Woman who wants next in this space,
How there will be good times too
How you will find allies
How representation matters
How your heart will burst wide open at graduation seeing your students celebrate with the
families, friends, and partners you've heard so much about
How you will create programs and events that matter and keep people thinking far longer than
the two hours it took to facilitate them
How you will laugh
How you will grow

And at the same time…
Kamala
…

Attn: Well-meaning Supervisors and Colleagues:

This is the context under which we exist
You're welcome

Researcher's Perspective

In the spring of 2017, I experienced what turned out to be the most defining moment of

my then fourteen-year student affairs career. After almost 10 years at the institution and four and

a half serving in my role as Multicultural Director, I found myself at the center of the country's

growing consternation over issues of race, equity and inclusion. Specifically, I became the target

of those concerned about their ever-loosening grip over constituting the majority population in

the United States and what they saw as a loss in the stronghold of white supremacy. That year, I

led, in collaboration with a diverse committee of students, staff, and faculty from around the college, the planning for the institutions annual two-day event: Day of Absence/Day of Presence (DA/DP).

One of the highlights of the event was the utilization of racial caucusing on the first day (Day of Absence). On this day, students, staff, and faculty who chose to participate in the event had two options. They could attend workshops and presentations around race designed specifically for those who identified as BIPOC (Black and Indigenous People of Color) off campus, or they could stay on campus and attend workshops and presentations designed for those who identified as white.

The 2017 event, like every event before it, reflected the needs of the time. Racial tensions were high and the nation had become incredibly divisive. A barrage of media reporting on the consistent state sanctioned violence against Black and Brown bodies by the police, numerous student protests decrying wide spread inequities at colleges and universities around the country, and the election of a new openly racist, sexist, ableist, and xenophobic president all informed the theme, design, and format of the event. It was within the above stated context that the DA/DP planning committee made the decision to switch locations for Day of Absence (people who identified as white where invited to workshops off campus, and BIPOC were invited to stay on campus to attend workshops). The move was symbolic and an important collective acknowledgement to the increased threat many BIPOC and other marginalized groups were feeling around the country. In a time of uncertainty, the committee wanted to center BIPOC and bring attention to their value to institutions of higher education, and specifically to Evergreen.

The event took place without issue and was the most successful in the colleges history resulting in approximately half of the campus community voluntarily participating in at least one

workshop, presentation, or activity. However, leading up to the event, there was pushback from one white male faculty member who took it upon himself to email me publicly and call me out for organizing an event he found to be steeped in "reverse racism" as I was "forcing white people to leave campus." Though I invited him to meet with me to discuss his concerns, I never received a response; however, approximately three weeks after the event took place, the opposing faculty member participated in an interview with Tucker Carlson on Fox news. The segment was entitled "campus craziness" and conflated an unrelated student protest with the faculty member's choice not to participate in DA/DP. As you might imagine, the blowback was swift. I began to receive hateful racist and sexist emails and voicemails at work. I was also attacked on social media, and my parents received racist phone calls and letters at their home address. While I felt supported by numerous students, staff, and faculty, I received little to no public support from the college leadership. Ultimately, I decided to leave as it was clear that that the institution did not care about my life or the work I had contributed to the college for almost 10 years.

My experience at Evergreen left me feeling silenced and dismissed. After years of feeling supported, Evergreen demonstrated that when the shit hit the fan, even at a "progressive" PWI, Black Women administrators could be treated as disposable. While my experience was more public than most, it made me wonder what other Black Women Multicultural Directors at PWIs were going through behind the scenes. What part of their stories had been left untold? When I searched the literature for stories of their experiences, there were none to be found. I realized that through this dissertation, I had an opportunity not only to center the voices of other Black Women Multicultural Directors, but to provide an opportunity for self-definition that had not yet been explored. Consequently, this study is both professional and personal for me. The result is research that is as much healing as it is a valid contribution to the academic literature.

Background

Though colleges and universities in the United States often consider themselves havens from the "real world," it is important to realize that they are indeed, just microcosms of the larger U.S. society. In this regard, they are comprised of the same racist and sexist ideologies that plague all institutions in the United States (Berry & Gross, 2020; Kendi, 2016; Wilder, 2013). In its privileging and encouraging of conformity to "norms and values rooted in white, male, western ideology" (Mertz, 2011, p. 45), higher education has created a culture at predominately white institutions (PWIs) that demands a degree of compliance with white supremacy and dominant gender ideologies (Collins, 2000; Mertz, 2011). Several researchers have noted the more one strays from what is considered "normal" in higher education (i.e., white and male), the more they may face negative consequences (Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Harris & Gonzalez, 2012; Turner et al., 2011). This creates an obvious challenge for Black Women administrators whose existence renders them incompatible with the "norm" and gives context to why Black Women administrators have long endured a history of discrimination at PWIs (Hughes & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Lloyd-Jones, 2009; Mosely, 1980; Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

Due to the tendency of higher education to enact institutional racism and sexism, Black Women administrators often experience the same treatment in their workplaces as they experience in their lives outside of work. Specifically, researchers have noted that Black Women administrators at PWIs experience varied forms of gendered racism, isolation, and tokenization that are grounded in white supremacy and enhance the discrimination Black Women encounter in these "chilly climates" (Gardner et al., 2014; Sobers, 2014; West, 2015; Wesley, 2018).

Black Women Student Affairs Professionals

Despite the numerous challenges they face, Black Women still continue to work within the field of higher education. In 2018, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that Black Women represented 9% of the 182,831 individuals employed in "student, academic affairs, and other educational services" positions in U.S. colleges and universities (Table 314.40). At 9%, Black Women currently make up the largest group of racially minoritized administrators in the field of higher education (West, 2020).

Findings from a recent survey on the characteristics and aspirations of over 400 Black Women student affairs professionals indicate many Black Women in student affairs work at PWIs in mid - level positions as Assistant Deans and Directors (West, 2017). Furthermore, West (2017) reported that many of these women worked in Multicultural Student Programs and Services. The statistics from NCES (2018) in combination with West's (2017) study are congruent with research indicating Black Women in student affairs at PWIs are overwhelmingly employed in mid-level positions (Miles, 2012) in diversity related areas (Crawford & Smith, 2005; Gardner et al., 2014; Stewart, 2016). Unfortunately, no national data exist on the exact number of Black Women who work in these positions. However, the most recent survey to date regarding multicultural student services noted that 80% of respondents associated with the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) indicated that their campus had an office dedicated to multicultural student populations and the person leading the office was most likely to carry the title of Director (Stewart & Bridges, 2011).

While the idea of Black Women serving as Multicultural Directors may seem innocuous, it bears further investigation. The scope of the Multicultural Director position can vary amongst institutions; in addition to supervision and various other administrative tasks, responsibilities

might also include (1) facilitating the learning and development of traditionally underserved students; (2) offering programs that educate the campus about diversity, multiculturalism, and interaction across differences in a global society; (3) convening departments across campus to facilitate intercultural dialogue; (4) working with on- and off-campus stakeholders to create an institutional community climate of justice, access, and equity (CAS, 2019, p. 353); and (5) helping underrepresented students feel a sense of belonging and support (CAS, 2019, p. 361). All of this in an increasingly divisive and antagonistic social climate around issues of race and social justice (Fuchs, 2020; Mwangi et al., 2018; SPLC, 2020).

So where does this leave Black Women who are currently serving in these roles? Essentially, Black Women administrators who serve as Multicultural Directors at predominately white institutions and who by numerous reports are already facing multiple forms of discrimination, are being charged to facilitate the progressive learning and development of students, (and sometimes staff and faculty) around issues of multiculturalism, equity, and social justice all while fostering a sense of belonging for underrepresented students in an environment in which they themselves may rarely feel supported. How then, do Black Women, arguably one of the most ostracized groups in higher education, experience the Multicultural Director role at PWIs?

Problem Statement

Although Black Women make up the largest group of racially minoritized administrators in the field of higher education (West, 2020), and are overwhelmingly employed in diversity related mid-level positions (i.e., Multicultural Directors), we know very little about their personal experiences in these roles. Only recently has the subject become the focus of research. In her qualitative study concerning Black Women in diversity roles at four-year predominantly white

institutions, Johnson (2021) explored the lived experiences of 11 Black Women who held diversity-related roles in housing/residence life and multicultural departments/centers at 11 public, four-year universities in the U.S. Of specific interest to Johnson (2021) was how Black Women's lived experiences in diversity positions affected their ability to perform the daily tasks of their roles. Findings indicated that Black Women in these positions: (1) held certain perceptions about who was supposed to occupy the role, (2) have to "bend" and "shift" (Harris-Perry as cited by Johnson, 2021) to navigate the PWI environment, (3) have either exceptionally positive or negative relationships with other Black Women, white women, and white men, and (4) often have to explore coping mechanisms to navigate their professional environments. Until Johnson (2021), research regarding Multicultural Directors had not focused on Black Women and either emphasized the Directors role in aiding the retention and success of students (June, 1996; Conerly, 2017) or discussed how the role affected professional advancement (Sutton & McClusky-Titus, 2012).

Further exploration of the experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors is imperative as the sociopolitical climate at PWIs is steeped in dominate culture that does not account for the unique standpoint Black Women's perspectives can bring to the institution (Horsford, 2012). Nor does it take into account that in their role as diversity leaders, Black Women Multicultural Directors may be understood as "functionally, symbolically, and personally representing the issues they are charged to address" (Nixon, 2013, p. 312). The perception and reality of this statement places Black Women Multicultural Directors in a unique position. Unlike other colleagues who may be able to separate their work lives from their personal lives, Black Women Multicultural Directors exist in the inescapable position of having an everyday experience of the professional being personal. In other words, the experiences Black

Women have in and outside of work are inextricably linked due to the systemic racism and sexism embedded in U.S. institutions (Berry & Gross, 2020; Kendi, 2016; Wilder, 2013). As Lomax (2015) stated in her article concerning Black Women faculty, "Black Women's lives matter within and outside of academia. The oppression and decisions Black Women face and make within and outside of the institution are linked" (paragraph 26). Assuming colleges and universities want to support and retain Black Women Multicultural Directors, and that Black Women want to continue working in these roles, it is necessary to learn more about the successes and challenges these Black Women encounter at the unique intersection of their racial, gender, and occupational identities.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the lived experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at predominately white institutions. Specifically, I sought to understand how Black Women Multicultural Directors describe the everyday experience of the professional being personal. Given what we know about the treatment of and beliefs about Black Women in the United States, it is imperative we investigate the ways in which Black Women navigate the unique intersection of their race, gender, and professional roles within institutions that perpetrate the same dominant ideologies that serve to oppress them outside of higher education. Consequently, this study was guided by one primary research question and three sub questions:

1. How do Black Women describe their experiences as Multicultural Directors at PWIs?
   a. How do Black Women Multicultural Directors describe the everyday experience of the professional being personal?

b. What are the advantages/challenges of being a Black Woman in the Multicultural Director Role?

c. How do Black Women practice resistance and persistence in their roles as Multicultural Directors?

Epistemological Framework

"What constitutes knowledge depends profoundly on the consensus and ethos of the community in which it is grounded" (p. 662).

Cynthia B. Dillard, 2000

In her seminal book *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Power,* Collins (2000) asked, "Why are African American Women and our ideas not known and not believed in" (p. 3)? In short, the answer is they are not seen as valid; particularly by a knowledge community that only recognizes truth endorsed by those in the dominant culture. An Endarkened Feminist Epistemology (EFE) challenges conventional forms of knowledge validation by embodying a cultural standpoint predicated on Black Women's ways of knowing. EFE unapologetically centers Black Women by locating knowledge and truth in the "intersection/overlap of the culturally constructed socializations of race, gender, and other identities and the historical and contemporary contexts of oppression and resistance for African-American Women" (Dillard, 2000, p. 661). Using EFE as a measure of truth in this study not only legitimizes the voices of Black Women, but asserts their experiences as "analytic, conceptual, and representational tools" that serve to illuminate the lived realities of Black Women Multicultural Directors (Dillard, 2000, p. 661). By situating my study in EFE, it becomes a given that we #BelieveBlackWomen. A more detailed description of EFE including the assumptions that undergird the theory will be outlined in chapter three.

Theoretical Framework

"Theories for understanding the needs of African American Women should be based on their cultural, personal, and social contexts, which clearly differ significantly from those who have not experienced racial or gender oppression."

Mary F. Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 20

I employ Black Feminist Thought (BFT) as a theoretical framework for this study to better illuminate the experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors. BFT was created by Black Women to acknowledge our unique perspective on the world. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins, who is credited with coining the term, notes that she did so with the intent of creating a theory that "placed African American women's experiences in the center of analysis without privileging those experiences" (Collins, 2000, p. 228). According to Collins (2000), Black Feminist Thought serves two purposes: 1) to contest the system of oppression that produced it, and 2) to empower Black Women who live within oppressive circumstances. In her article *Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought*, Collins (1986) outlines three key themes of Black Womanhood which she believes represents the core ideas of Black feminism: (1) self-definition and self-valuation, (2) the interlocking nature of oppression, and (3) the importance of Black Women's culture. These themes are grounded in the assumptions that Black Women, as a group, possess a unique standpoint that cannot be separated from the historical conditions that have shaped their lives. Additionally, while they share certain commonalities, interlocking identity markers such as class, religion, sexual orientation, and age have resulted in different expressions of these themes for individual Black Women. In all, "Black feminist thought contains observations and interpretations about Black Womanhood that describe and explain different expressions of common themes" (Collins, 1986, p. S16). Due

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to its significance in this study, themes and ideas that shape Black Feminist Thought are given further explanation in chapter two.

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Significance

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This study is significant in several ways. First, it enhanced the body of literature regarding Black Women administrators in higher education by utilizing culturally relevant research and design methods. Next, this study provided potential/aspiring Black Women Multicultural Directors and leaders in the field of student affairs an insider's perspective regarding the lived experience of being a Black Woman Multicultural Director beyond the requirements listed in the job description. Additionally, it provided recognition and voice to those Black Women who are currently working as Multicultural Directors. Lastly, supervisors and colleagues of Black Women Multicultural Directors can use the information in this study to interrogate their personal interactions and professional practices with Black Women colleagues.

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Definition of Terms

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Black Girl Magic

A term and a movement popularized by CaShawn Thompson in 2013 to celebrate the beauty, power, and resilience of Black women and to recognize their accomplishments (Smith, 2016; Thomas 2015).

Black Women

For the purpose of this study, Black Women are defined as individuals throughout the African diaspora currently living in the United States who identify as female biologically, socially, or culturally, regardless of sex at birth (Meyer, 2016).

Mid-level Student Affairs Administrator

An individual who has been working in student affairs at least five years as a full-time student affair professional and has responsibility for the direction, control, or supervision of one or more student affairs functions, or one or more professional staff members (ACPA, 2015). Mid- level managers typically report to a senior or executive level and have titles such as Assistant Director, Associate Director, Director, Assistant Dean, Associate Dean, or Dean (Johnsrud et al., 2000).

Multicultural Center

A space/office at colleges and universities (typically) administered through the Division of Student Affairs (Stewart, 2011) and established as a result of Black student protests in the 1960s (Patton, 2005). Today, these offices provide support services for a broad range of students who had been historically disenfranchised including those who identify as BIPOC, LGTBQ, women, first generation, international, and religious (Patton & Hannon, 2008; Shuford, 2011). In addition to improving retention and graduation rates among students of color and other marginalized students on campus (Castillo-Cullather & Stewart, 2002; Princes, 1994), these centers also aid in reducing the sense of isolation, alienation, and lack of belonging experienced by underrepresented students by providing meeting space and facilitating programming that celebrates history and culture and aids in racial/ethnic identity development, and contributes to a welcoming campus environment (Milem et al., 2005; Jones et al., 2002; Patton, 2010; Toya, 2011). While Multicultural Centers are open to all students who are part of the campus community, their primary purpose is to advocate for the personal, academic, and social development of students from underrepresented populations (Cox, 2001)

Multicultural Directors

Multicultural Directors are typically classified as mid-level administrators within Student Affairs. As such, they are responsible for the direct supervision of professional staff and completing various administrative tasks (i.e. budgeting and strategic planning) while also reporting to a senior or executive level administrator (Mather et al., 2009; Stewart & Bridges, 2011). The roles and responsibilities for Multicultural Directors vary from institution to institution; however, results of a survey conducted by Stewart and Bridges (2011) regarding multicultural student services indicated that the primary responsibilities of multicultural services leaders consisted of (1) multicultural programming, (2) student advising and consulting with senior level administrators on multicultural student issues, and (3) conducting professional development for faculty, staff, and other constituents.

Predominately White Institutions (PWIs)

Institutions of higher learning in which whites account for 50% or greater of the student enrollment (Brown & Dancy, 2010) and whose histories, policies, practices, and ideologies center whiteness or the white majority. PWIs, by design, tend to marginalize the identities, perspectives, and practices of Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) (Morales & Raible, 2021).

Professional Being Personal

Concept based on "personal is political" slogan made popular by second wave feminist to describe how the personal and professional experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at PWIs are inextricably linked due to the systemic racism and sexism embedded in U.S. institutions.

White Supremacy

The social, economic, and political systems that collectively enable white people to maintain power over people of other races (Merriam-Webster, 2020). White supremacy as an ideology posits white people and the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of white people are superior to ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and actions of Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) (Racial Equity Tools, 2020). Furthermore, DiAngelo (2017) noted white supremacy defines whites as the norm or standard for humans, and BIPOC as an inherent deviation from that norm.

My Position on Language

'Cause the words that come from your mouth
You're the first to hear
Speak words of beauty and you will be there
No matter what anybody says
What matters most is what you think of yourself

India Arie, 2002

In the verse above, neo-soul singer India Arie poetically describes the powerful relationship between thoughts and speech by reminding the listener they have the power to define themselves. Analogous to Arie's listeners, practitioners of Black Feminist Thought are called upon to challenge and resist established ways of thinking to redefine their experiences. This sentiment is echoed by authors of the Journal of College Student Development's Supplemental Style Guide, who have disrupted conventional knowledge by illuminating the ways in which capitalization has been used to denote power and legitimacy in writing (Stewart et al., 2017). Though presented as such, the authors assert the decision to capitalize terms is never neutral. It is in this understanding I decided to follow the lead of other

scholars in the field of education (Perez-Huber, 2010; Stewart et al., 2017) in their efforts to decenter whiteness by choosing not to capitalize the word white or its related forms in my dissertation. Inversely, as both an act of self-definition and centering of marginalized voices, I will be capitalizing the terms Black Woman and Black Women. In doing so, I aim to honor and elevate the contributions of Black Women to this research endeavor; reminding us what matters most is what we think of ourselves.

Summary

This research study sought to investigate the phenomena of the professional being personal by exploring the lived experiences of Black Women who serve as Multicultural Directors at predominately white institutions. Specifically, I aimed to understand what Black Women consider to be their challenges/advantages as well as how they experience the professional as personal. Additionally, I wanted to know how they practiced resistance within their roles. I will make sense of these experiences through use of an Endarkened Feminist Epistemology situated in Black Women's ways of knowing and a theoretical framework that looks to Black Women to define themselves in opposition to dominant white supremacist ideology. Finally, because there is limited research on this topic, this study not only enhances the body of literature regarding Black Women administrators in higher education and student affairs; but it also provides both aspiring Black Women Multicultural Directors and student affairs leaders an insider's perspective regarding our professional lived experiences. The next chapter provides a review of the existing literature surrounding my proposed topic.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature that serves as context for exploring the lived experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). I begin by providing an overview of the guiding theoretical framework used for this study: Black Feminist Thought. I then turn my attention to the campus culture at PWIs by examining how the institution of higher education was designed to perpetrate white supremacy and exclude those who identified as anything other than white men. Next, I outline the ways in which racism and sexism have created challenges for Black Women, illuminating the specific ways these challenges have impacted their roles as administrators within higher education. Finally, I explore the history and purpose of Multicultural Centers at PWIs and examine the role of Multicultural Directors.

Theoretical Framework: Black Feminist Thought

Black Feminist Thought (BFT) was created by Black Women to acknowledge our unique perspective on the world. Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins, who is credited with coining the term, proposed that the unpublished, untold, and unknown stories of African American women had a negative impact on their ability to fully understand their position, importance, and influence within national and global contexts (Collins, 2000). This study served to address Collins' (2000) assertion with specific consideration to the experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at PWIs. According to Collins (2000), Black Feminist Thought serves two purposes: 1) to contest the system of oppression that produced it, and 2) to empower Black Women who live within oppressive circumstances.

There are six distinguishing features of BFT (Collins, 2000). The first is a recognition of the bond between experience and consciousness that impacts the lived experiences of Black Women and forms a distinctive standpoint. The second feature acknowledges the diverse responses Black Women may have to oppression. Despite facing common challenges, the unique makeup of an individual's interlocking identities (i.e., sexuality, ethnicity, socioeconomic status) prevent the existence of a homogenous Black Woman's standpoint. In other words, not all Black Women experience life the same; however, Black Women as a collective can still acknowledge occurrences of differential group treatment (Johnson, 2015). A third feature of BFT concerns the interdependent nature of thought and action. A major component of BFT is to stimulate resistance and activism among Black Women. As such, thoughts are assumed to lead to action and vice-versa. The fourth feature of BFT focuses on its diverse array of intellectual contributors. BFT values the everyday, informal knowledge Black Women share with each other as well as the more formal knowledge provided by Black Women experts. Both perspectives provide a valid means to understanding Black Women's standpoint. The fifth feature highlights the fluid nature of social conditions. As BFT is designed to combat the social injustices that impede Black Women's progress, practitioners must change when social conditions change (Johnson, 2015). Finally, the sixth feature connects Black Feminist Theorists with the broader goal of social justice for all humans. There is a recognition that "Black feminist consciousness should be grounded in the greater struggle for human dignity, empowerment, and social justice if meaningful and sustainable change is to be realized" (West, 2019, p. 8). These six features are central to what Collins (1986) considered to be the key themes at the core of Black feminism: self-definition and self-valuation, the interlocking nature of oppression, and the importance of Black Women's culture. These themes are further grounded in the assumption that Black

Women, as a group, possess a unique standpoint that cannot be separated from the historical conditions that have shaped their lives.

Self-Definition and Self-Valuation

"If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive."

Audre Lorde (1984, p. 138)

As noted above by acclaimed poet Audre Lorde, it is extremely important that Black Women find ways to define themselves outside of the stereotypical images that dominant society has placed upon them. Self-definition requires that we challenge and deconstruct these externally defined perceptions of Black Womanhood. Stereotypical caricatures of Black Women have been used to dehumanize and exploit Black Women to control assertive Black female behavior for centuries (King, 1973). Researchers have noted many of these stereotypes (sapphire, jezebel, mammie) are just distorted versions of Black Women's behavior seen as most threatening to white patriarchy (Gilkes, 1981; White, 1985). Far from accidental, these inaccurate portrayals serve to further dehumanize Black Women in the white psyche. Perceptions of Black Women as strong, independent, and powerful are dangerous because they contradict white supremacist ideology and present a threat to the status quo. You see, "when Black Women define themselves, they clearly reject the taken-for-granted assumption that those in positions granting them the authority to describe and analyze reality are entitled to do so" (Collins, 1986, p. S17).

Self-valuation advances the idea of self-definition, replacing stereotypical images with authentic Black female images. It allows Black Women to reframe aspects of Black Womanhood that may have previously been perceived as negative in a manner that takes our experiences into

account. By defining assertiveness and other "unfeminine" qualities as necessary and functional attributes for survival, Black Women essentially challenge the content of the externally defined controlling images that have been placed upon us; thereby acknowledging and defying existing power dynamics (Collins, 1986). In this study, self-definition and self-valuation provide Black Women Multicultural Directors at PWIs a method of self-analysis that more accurately aligns with their experiences at work.

Interlocking Nature of Oppression

Black feminists discuss Black Women's oppression in regard to the multiple forms of oppression they face; specifically, those of race, gender, and class (Collins, 1986). Other aspects of a Black Woman's identity such as sexuality, religion, and age are also relevant when considering Black Women's varying experiences of oppression in the United States. Therefore, rather than addressing each element of identity individually, BFT applies an intersectional approach by focusing on the links among the systems of oppression. In 1991, Kimberlè Crenshaw (1991) coined this approach intersectionality and stated the following,

> Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. The intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism. Any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular way Black Women are subordinated. (p. 58)

The use of an intersectional perspective allows Black feminist theorists to make a more nuanced analysis of the lives and experiences of Black Women. Hooks (1984) further acknowledged the need for intersectionality in her examination of dualistic thinking which she believes to be "the central ideological component of all systems of domination in Western society" (p. 29). Further, Collins (1986) asserts, dichotomous thinking is harmful because it places the two sides in

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opposition to each other making one inherently right and the other inherently wrong. One side is superior, while the other side is inferior. This type of thinking sets Black Women up to lose before they have even started playing the game as they have already "been assigned the inferior half of several dualities, and this placement has been central to their continued domination" (Collins, p. S20). An intersectional viewpoint that acknowledges the interlocking nature of various oppressions is not only useful in examining the experiences of Black Women, it also informs how Black Women working as Multicultural Directors understand the simultaneity of oppression that affects students of color as well as those from other marginalized groups.

Importance of Black Women's Culture

This third theme of BFT involves "actionable" re-creation. It is an opportunity for Black Women to create and pass on works for other Black Women that places our history and experiences in the appropriate context. Collins (1986) believes Black Women's culture provides the "ideological frame of reference – namely, the symbols and values of self-definition and self-valuation – that assist Black Women in seeing the circumstances shaping race, class, and gender oppression" (p. S22). It is important to remember however, that while Black Women's lives may be linked by common themes, the experience of those themes are not monolithic. In other words, all Black Women do not experience life in the United States the same. Factors such as socioeconomic status, religion, sexuality, and age influence individual Black Women's lived experiences. Collins (1986) notes there is not one culture that defines all Black Women; instead, "there are (multiple) socially-constructed Black Women's cultures that collectively form Black Women's culture" (p. S22). This definition of Black Women's culture is beneficial to this study as it helps to explain how Black Women Multicultural Directors who have a shared experience in the U.S. can have both similar and differing experiences at their individual PWIs.

Outsider Within Status

Self-definition/self-valuation, the interlocking nature of oppression, and the importance of Black Women's culture all inform the lived experience and standpoint of Black Women in the US. Merton (1972) asserts that "Black Women's experienced realities provide them with special perspectives and insights of outsiders who have been systematically frustrated by the system" (p. 29). Collins (1986) supports this notion in stating that "a good deal of the Black female experience has been spent coping with, avoiding, subverting, and challenging the workings of white male insiderism" (p. S26). It is therefore unsurprising that Black Women have developed a standpoint distinct from that of those in the dominant culture. This standpoint places Black Women as "outsiders within"—a status in which they live in the margins of white society In spaces where the intersections of their race, gender and class prevent them from gaining full membership into any one group. Outsiders are simultaneously close enough, but far enough not to receive long lasting power, privilege, prestige, and insider knowledge. Acclaimed Black Woman faculty member and scholar Mary Howard-Hamilton (2003) noted the specific ways in which this status affects Black Women in higher education:

> African-American Women in higher education have been invited into places where the dominant group has assembled, but they remain outsiders because they are still invisible and have no voice when dialogue commences. A sense of belonging can never exist because there is no personal or cultural fit between the experiences of African American Women and the dominant group. (p. 21)

While living in this marginal space can be a painful experience, there are also benefits to being an "outsider within." Simmel (as cited by Collins, 1986) highlighted the ability to see patterns

that those immersed in the situation may not. Similarly, hooks (1989) perceived "outsider status" as a space that "nourished one's capacity to resist" and offered "the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create" (p. 20). I use these key themes of BFT to frame the design, inform the process, and guide the analysis of data in this study.

Campus Culture at PWIs

Predominantly white institutions (PWIs) are defined as institutions of higher learning in which whites account for 50% or more of the student enrollment and whose histories, policies, practices, and ideologies center whiteness or the white majority (Brown & Dancy, 2010). Despite mission statements and institutional leaders' assertions of valuing diversity and equity, Black Women administrators continue to experience "chilly" climates when working at PWIs. One reason for this disconnect may be due to the normalization of what it means to be a predominantly white university. Bourke (2016) noted that the term PWI is more than just a reflection of compositional diversity at an institution, it is also a reminder of the racism on which these institutions were founded and currently operate (Hughes, 2014). At its core, the term PWI denotes the extent to which whiteness and white supremacy are interwoven throughout organizational practices (Bourke, 2016).

White Institutional Presence (WIP)

In a dissertation concerning the impact of whiteness on predominantly white campuses, Gusa (2009) describes PWIs as the result of "human decisions that position white worldview as normative and its educational white ideological practices as neutral" (p. 16). The author goes on to define a socio-cultural framework they have coined white institutional presence (WIP) that fuses western mainstream worldviews that value independence, competition, and dominance with the racial ideology of white supremacy (Gusa, 2009). WIP focuses on the messages and

practices of white normativity at PWIs by outlining four attributes: white ascendancy, monoculturalism, white blindness, and white estrangement (Gusa, 2009). The first attribute, white ascendancy, consist of two dimensions; 1) the belief that white ideas, knowledge, values, societal roles, norms and understanding of history are superior and 2) exhibiting a belief of superiority through a sense of entitlement (Gusa, 2009). White ascendancy creates an environment where those who do not identify as white are encouraged to assimilate to succeed. Monoculturalism, the second attribute of WIP, restricts alternative worldviews by privileging the perspectives, voice, and knowledge of white people (Patton et al., 2007). Monoculturalism reflects an institutions cultural legacy and is exemplified in the naming of buildings, the statues and artwork on campus, and faculty members lack of using nonwhite scholarship in their classes (Sue et al., 2007). When an institution utilizes a white monocultural frame, issues concerning Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) become the primary responsibility of faculty and administrators of color. The third attribute is whiteblindness. Whiteblindness is like colorblindness, except instead of ignoring color, it dismisses the roles of white identity and white privilege. When people are "white blind" they fail to see how the things they say and do might be predicated in white supremacy. Whiteblindness and colorblindness constitute color evasive attitudes that avoid acknowledging the negative impact of racism and allow institutional leaders to rationalize racial injustice and inequities. (Dize, 2011; Patel, 2016). The fourth and final attribute of WIP is white estrangement, an act in which white people distance themselves physically and socially from nonwhites (Gusa, 2009). An understanding of WIP is relevant to this study in that it demonstrates how the white compositional majority at PWIs influences a climate that has been deemed "chilly" for Black Women administrators.

Anti-Blackness

      A review of the campus culture at PWIs would be remiss if it did not include a discussion of the concept of anti-Blackness. Anti-Blackness is the principal concern of a theoretical framework called Afro-pessimism that contends that Black people exist in a structurally antagonistic relationship with humanity (Dumas, 2016). More than just racism against Black people, [anti-blackness] is "a theoretical framework that illuminates society's inability to recognize our humanity – [it is] the disdain, disregard, and disgust for our existence" (Ross, 2020, para. 5). The concept of anti-Blackness asserts that despite the abolishment of slavery over 150 years ago, many still envision Black people as enslaved (Ross, 2020). In doing so, society is able to continue its "thingification" of Black people (Ross). This dehumanization is crucial to the ability to dismiss or justify the constant discrimination and state violence enacted upon Black bodies in the United States. Being a Black Woman in the United States requires that one live with the fact that "Black people continue to pay the highest penalties on pretty much every social measure or outcome imaginable within social structures…all things being equal, we are still the most vulnerable group to structural violence, social injustice, discrimination and exclusion" (Kinouani as cited by Morris, 2020, para. 26).

      In an article that discussed anti-Blackness and inclusion rhetoric in student affairs, Stewart (2019) was specific in acknowledging the relationship between anti-Blackness and the sociopolitical climate in the US. Specifically, he noted how anti-Blackness and white supremacy have continued unchecked despite the emergence of a supposed post racial era in the U.S. following the Obama Presidency. Unsurprisingly, shortly after the 2016 election of President Obama's successor, Donald Trump - an openly racist, sexist, xenophobe; colleges and universities nationwide reported an increase in racial incidents, two-thirds of which "promoted

white supremacist groups or ideology" (Campus Racist Incidents Surged After Election, 2017, para. 1). Moreover, multiple universities were targeted with racist threats and attacks (Milligan, 2016; Reilly, 2016). Continuing a trend in the Trump era, the FBI recently reported a 3% increase in hate crimes across the United States for the year 2019; 9.6% of which occurred at schools/colleges (FBI.gov, 2020; SPLC, 2020). Further, hate based attacks have coincided with growth of white nationalism in the United States resulting in growth of white nationalist hate groups by 55% between 2017 and 2019 (SPLC, 2020). Like every year, the vast majority of race-based hate crimes in 2019 were directed at Black people (SPLC, 2020). The prevalence of anti-Blackness in higher education is far from surprising when considering the discriminatory histories of PWIs.

A History of Inclusion/Exclusion

In their initial research outlining a model for understanding campus racial climate, Hurtado et al. (1998) noted how an institutions historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion could continue to affect the current climate of a PWI. Specifically, the authors name "the maintenance of policies that serve a homogenous population" and "attitudes that prevent interaction across race" as remnants of a culture embedded in historical segregation that sustains benefits for dominant groups (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 283). Since its inception, higher education in the United States has been rooted in the establishment of predominantly white colleges created to educate affluent white men (Brown & Dancy, 2010; Wilder, 2013). In their desire to keep the U.S. predominantly white, colonial leaders and college presidents, used slave labor to build their campuses, cook their food, and maintain their living spaces while simultaneously upholding laws in the majority of states that denied free and enslaved Blacks the right to assemble, attend school, or learn how to read and write (Bourke, 2016; Dancy et al., 2018; Span, 2015). In fact, Wilder

(2013) noted that enslaved Black people outnumbered faculty and administrators at several of the nation's Ivy League colleges. Using Black people to maintain functioning while denying them educational access positioned the colonial university as a bedrock of social inequality and white supremacy in the U.S. (Dancy et al., 2018).

Oberlin, a liberal arts college in Ohio, was the first PWI to openly admit women and African Americans. Further, the college adopted specific policies that permitted Blacks to attend in large numbers (Harper et al., 2009). According to research conducted by Harper et al. (2009), prior to Oberlin's founding in 1833, only three African Americans had graduated from colonial colleges. Overwhelmingly, Blacks who attended college in the late 19th and early 20th centuries did so at one of the few financially strapped private schools or Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) that had been established by northern churches, white missionary groups and land grants (Harper et al., 2009). As many southern whites viewed higher education for Blacks (and women) as a threat to white supremacy (and patriarchy), widespread access was slow to arrive (Allen & Jewell, 2002).

Grounded in the institution of slavery, these historically white institutions largely continued dealing in exclusionary practices that denied access to BIPOC and women until the mid 19th century. In fact, before *Brown v. Board of Education* made it illegal to segregate schools in 1954, Blacks only accounted for 1% of attendees at PWIs (Harper et al., 2009). It was not until legislative enactments of the G.I. Bill (1944), Civil Rights Act (1964), Higher Education Act (1965), and Affirmative Action (1965), that Blacks, women, and other historically marginalized populations were provided large scale access to the nation's formally inaccessible PWIs. Created in 1944 to assist veterans returning from WWII, the GI Bill awarded stipends for tuition and expenses to attend college or trade schools (Cohen, 2010; History, 2019). The Civil Rights Act

(1964), made it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of race, color, or national origin for any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance (Malaney, 1987). Additionally, Title VI of the Act restricted the distribution of federal funds to segregated schools (Harper et al., 2009). The rights afforded African Americans and other marginalized populations in the Civil Rights Act were significantly enhanced by the Higher Education Act of 1965. Created in part to govern and administer federal aid to students with financial need, Harper et al. (2009) noted the Act "afforded opportunities to matriculate at institutions that were once completely inaccessible to non-whites" (p.397) the Act also served to emphasize equal access to education (The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1865, 2020). Finally, enactment of Affirmative Action in 1965 through Executive Order 11246, required federal contractors to take affirmative action to expand job opportunities for minority workers (Harper et al., 2009). One of the ways in which Affirmative Action was enacted on college and university campuses was through the revamping of admissions policies to implicitly consider race when selecting students (American Association for Access, Equity and Diversity, 2019).

An understanding of the culture and history of PWIs in the United States is integral in its ability to give context to the white supremacist ideologies that serve to marginalize contemporary Black Women Administrators. However, a more comprehensive analysis of their experiences is needed. In the following section I discuss specific challenges that impact Black Women administrators at work.

How Racism and Sexism Impact Black Women

Various researchers have studied the numerous ways in which Black Women have been marginalized in and outside of higher education (Durr & Wingfield, 2011; Hinton, 2001; Holmes, 2008; Kishimoto & Mwangi, 2009; Lewis & Neville, 2015; McCluney & Rabelo, 2019;

Nixon, 2017). Patitu and Hinton (2003) went so far as to provide a tailored definition of marginalization for Black Women, describing it as "any issue, situation, or circumstance that has placed African American women outside of the flow of power and influence within their institutions" (p. 82). Marginalization is so common among Black Women administrators that Joseph (2020) called them "one of the most marginalized groups in academia" (p. 51). While a complete synthesis of the ways racism and sexism have informed the marginalization of Black Women administrators at PWIs is beyond the scope of this study, I have chosen to provide an in-depth discussion of three factors related to the investigation of the lived experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at PWIs: gendered racism, isolation, and tokenization.

Gendered Racism

The most obvious challenges Black Women administrators face in a racist and sexist society are the duplicity of their existence- race and gender (ASHE, Higher Education Report, 2009). Sociologist Philomena Essed (1991) coined the term gendered racism to capture the complexity of suffering the dual effects of racism and sexism Black Women experience throughout the course of their lives (Szymanski & Lewis, 2016). In discussing the connectedness of race and gender within the constructs of Black Feminist Thought (BFT), Collins (1990) asserted it was impossible to separate the two because they are bound to each other. Support for this idea can be found in a study that explored the experiences of Black Women mid-level and senior-level administrators in higher education in which participants identified both racism and sexism as pertinent issues but were torn as to which was more salient (Hinton, 2001).

Gendered Racial Microaggressions

One of the ways gendered racism affects the professional lives of Black Women is through gendered racial microaggressions (GRM). GRMs are defined as the "subtle and

everyday verbal, behavioral, and environmental expressions of oppression based on the intersection of one's race and gender" (Lewis & Neville, 2015, p. 289). Findings from a subsequent study from the authors regarding Black Women's experiences at PWIs, identified silencing and marginalization as two common forms of GRM (Lewis et al., 2016). Specifically, marginalization was exemplified through a struggle for respect as their intellect and authority were consistently challenged in the work environment. Silencing was illustrated through being ignored and made to feel invisible. In addition to GRM, Black Women also experience gendered racism through stereotypes of Black Womanhood.

Stereotypes

As members of a stigmatized group, Black Women must participate in a society that continues to devalue their abilities through the maintenance of negative stereotypes regarding dominance, sexuality, and resilience (Jerald et al., 2017a). Stereotypical caricatures of Black Women as sassy, overly assertive, argumentative sapphires, hypersexual jezebels, or loyal, self-sacrificing, complacent mammies have served to subjugate and dehumanize Black Women throughout the course of U.S. history (Collins; 2000; Jerald et al., 2017b; Nelson et al., 2016). Subsequently, Black Women student affairs administrators at PWIs have frequently been labeled as incompetent (Myers, 2002), less qualified (Miles, 2012), and angry (Hayes, 2012) causing these women to spend a good portion of their careers defending themselves from these stereotypes and fighting to prove merit when it is already apparent (Myers, 2002).

Though seemingly positive, a more recent stereotype, the "strong Black Woman," prioritizes the needs of others over her own, faces adversity with emotional resilience, all while managing personal and professional responsibilities (Jerald et al., 2017a). However, Nelson et al. (2016) found strict adherence to these characteristics could prevent Black Women from voicing

their needs which typically already go unacknowledged and ignored. Regardless of the form, gendered racism has negatively affected Black Women's physical and psychological health (Carr et al., 2014; Chinn, 2015; Lewis & Neville, 2015; Williams & Mohammed, 2013). Adding more concern, Jerald et al. (2017a) claimed, "Black Women do not need to internalize these stereotypes for them to be damaging. Simply being aware that the stereotypes about Black Women exist and that others may consequently judge their behavior against them may be sufficient" (p. 488). Dealing with microaggressions and stereotypes could cause Black Women to perform emotional labor in the workplace (Miller et al., 2019).

Emotional Labor

The term emotional labor refers to the "invisible and often undervalued work involved in keeping other people comfortable and happy" (de la Cretaz, 2020, para.1) and was originally conceptualized by Hochschild (1983) in regard to the expectation for employees who work in service-oriented jobs to regulate their "true" emotions at work and instead perform in ways counter to their feelings as means to appease customers. In their research regarding emotional labor among faculty who teach diversity courses, Miller et al. (2019) noted how emotional labor in academia is often gendered and racialized and the labor tends to be amplified for faculty teaching classes on diversity. For Black Women, emotional labor often manifests as suppression of emotions for the specific purpose of not seeming angry. This notion is supported by Durr and Wingfield (2011) who in a study regarding Black Women and the effects of emotional labor, noted professional Black Women often feel compelled to perform emotional labor because of a hyperawareness of how they are perceived in the work setting. Durr et al. (2011) went on to note that these performances were "shaped by the ways intersections of race and gender isolate Black Women and place them under greater scrutiny" (p. 564).

Isolation

Researchers have identified several ways in which Black Women administrators experience isolation at PWIs citing underrepresentation (West, 2020), hostile environments (Jean-Marie & Brooks, 2011), limited access to resources (Lloyd-Jones, 2011), and exclusion from opportunities to provide input (Kishimoto & Mwangi, 2009). In a study regarding the experiences of Black Women Student Affairs professionals who worked at PWIs, underrepresentation emerged as a theme that contributed to feelings of isolation at work (West, 2015). Additionally, a qualitative analysis of 50 research studies about women of color in higher education found that feelings of isolation caused many of the women to leave their positions (Ortega-Liston & Rodríguez-Soto, 2014).

The isolation described by Black Women throughout the literature alluded to both psychological (loneliness) and physical (underrepresentation) definitions. Participants in West's (2015) study noted that in addition to physical isolation, Black Women in Student Affairs also experienced an inability to connect with non-Black colleagues. Because the perspectives of Black Women are devalued by dominant culture, they are routinely dismissed and/or misunderstood; placing Black Women administrators at a disadvantage in the academy where societal status can overshadow achievement and success (Henry, 2010). Further, in her study of women of color senior diversity officers, Nixon (2017) noted the combination of being a woman of color leader and serving within a diversity role seemed to constitute a particular form of isolation in which the women felt left out on their own to navigate political landmines while also being expected to activate allies (Nixon, 2017).

Physical isolation in higher education is a result of underrepresentation due to a lack of critical mass. In order to reach critical mass, there must be enough Black Women in attendance

that they feel comfortable participating in a group without feeling like a spokesperson for their race/gender. Researchers who have studied the underrepresentation of Black Women in Student Affairs have reported negative effects including limited access to decision making, not having their perspective represented within the larger group, and being the "lone voice" (Henry, 2010; West; 2015). Underrepresentation in higher education can lead to Black Women being treated as tokens.

Tokenization

Tokenization is the result of underrepresentation occurring when Black Women are the minority member of a group dynamic (Smith, 2016). According to Stroshine and Brandl (2011), tokens are those who compromise less than 15% of a group's total. Tokenization is not only isolating, putting Black Women administrators in a position to speak on behalf of all Black people, it is also stressful (West, 2015). This assertion is supported by a study concerning Black Women in the academy in which Holmes (2008) found that PWIs relied heavily on Black Women administrators because of the low number of administrators of color on campus. Examples of tokenization in higher education include recruiting Black Women administrators in order to appear inclusive (Neimann, 1999), and only hiring Black Women for diversity related roles (Vargas, 2011). Both instances are problematic as they intrinsically reduce the value of Black Women administrators in higher education.

Hypervisibility

McCluney and Rabelo (2019) noted Black Women experience "intersectional invisibility" in professional settings wherein their intersectional marginalized identities result in them being both hyper-visible and invisible. Settles (2018) defines hyper-visibility as "scrutiny based on perceived difference," resulting in an individual "being recognized for their 'otherness'

or deviance from the norm" (p. 2). Kanter and Stein (1980) suggested that this visibility propels the token to the forefront. As a result, everything they do stands out, putting pressure on Black Women administrators to perform at a higher level as their mistakes are more noticeable than those of their peers in the majority. In a chapter discussing the experiences of women of color in academia, Niemann (2012) asserted, "their failures, in particular, are seen as reflective of their demographic group, while their successes are considered exceptions to the rule or stereotype about their group" (p. 473). Holmes (2008) reiterated this thought when she reported that Black Women administrators had the sense that they were always "on," feeling the need to simultaneously represent Black people and dispel myths about Black Women 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The reverse of hyper-visibility, invisibility is also a result of tokenization.

Invisibility

Seemingly incongruent, Black Women have also reported feeling invisible in their workplaces. Results from a study regarding the invisibility of Black Women conducted by Sesko and Biernat (2010) indicated white participants were least likely to correctly recognize Black Women in comparison to other groups and that they were less likely to distinguish Black Women from one another. Further, participants confused Black Women's contributions with those of other Black Women. The researchers suggested that this experience of invisibility was due to Black Women's non-prototypical existence (Sesko & Biernat, 2010). In other words, because Black Women do not fit stereotypes associated with Black men (because they are women) or white women (because they are Black) they become unidentifiable. Distinctive from being literally unnoticed, Black Women instead are treated as "interchangeable and indistinguishable from each other" which makes them "less visible compared to other groups" (p. 360). Results

from the Sesko and Biernat (2010) study align with bell hooks (1981) contention that the United States has socialized Black Women out of existence. She stated,

> We [Black Women] are rarely recognized as a group separate and distinct from Black men, or as a present part of the larger group ''women'' in this culture. When Black people are talked about, sexism militates against the acknowledgment of the interests of Black Women; when women are talked about racism militates against a recognition of Black female interests. When Black people are talked about the focus tends to be on Black men; and when women are talked about the focus tends to be on white women. (p. 7)

hooks' assessment of Black Women is summative of the challenges they encounter in a racist and sexist society where they must overcome considerable adversity that others do not in order to establish themselves as professionals. The marginalization Black Women administrators experience due to gendered racism, isolation, and tokenization can cause them to doubt themselves and question the validity of their contributions. These challenges are persistent and significant as exemplified through their continued presence in literature regarding Black Women in higher education spanning the course of two centuries. Notwithstanding the opposition they face, many Black Women still choose to provide leadership in one of the most politicized spaces on campus: Multicultural Centers.

Multicultural Centers

An attempt to understand the lived experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors necessitates a critical review of the offices they manage. In the following section, I discuss the history and purpose of Multicultural Centers and the responsibilities of those who lead them.

History and Purpose of Multicultural Centers

Today's Multicultural Centers are an extension of Black Cultural Centers that were developed in the 1960s as a direct result of the protest efforts of disenfranchised Black students at PWIs. Enactments of the G.I. Bill (1944), the Civil Rights Act (1964), Affirmative Action (1965) and the Higher Education Act (1965), provided funding and developed pathways that encouraged thousands of Black and other racially marginalized students to enroll in the nation's previously inaccessible colleges and universities. In discussing the emergence of Black Cultural Centers in higher education, Patton (2005) noted that the number of Black undergraduates at PWIs increased tremendously over the course of a decade growing from 3000 in 1960 to 98,000 in 1970. Unsurprisingly, administrators and faculty at these institutions failed to consider how societal norms of racism and oppression could present issues for BIPOC that were "qualitatively and quantitatively different from those faced by white students" (Ponce, as cited by Shuford, 2011, p. 32). Instead, institutional leaders banked on the assumption that BIPOC students would just assimilate into the institutional culture (Carodine et al., 2016; Patton & Hannon, 2008). As a result of the lack of foresight among administrators, Black and other students of color experienced an environment of widespread overt and covert racism at PWIs that resulted in feelings of isolation and marginalization (Williamson, 1999). Fueled by the momentum of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, Black students refused to be maligned and organized protests on campuses demanding the establishment of Black studies departments, Black Cultural Centers and increased recruitment of Black students and faculty (Princes, 1994; Sanders, 2016; Patton, 2006). Ill-prepared to address the needs and concerns of BIPOC, administrators at PWIs conceded to Black students' demands. The Black and other monocultural centers (Asian/Pacific Islander, Chicana/o Latina/o, Women, and Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, and Queer)

(Smith, 2018) that were created in response to these protests were charged with improving retention and graduation rates among students of color and other marginalized students on campus (Castillo-Cullather & Stewart, 2002; Princes, 1994). These centers also reduced the sense of isolation, alienation, and lack of belonging experienced by underrepresented students by promoting success through cultural programming that celebrates history and culture, aids in racial/ethnic identity development, and contributes to a welcoming campus environment (Hurtado et al., 1998; Jones et al., 2002; Patton, 2010; Toya, 2011).

Though students ultimately won their fight for the establishment of cultural centers on predominantly white campuses, it can be argued that the motivation on the part of administrators was not necessarily altruistic. By conceding to student demands, leaders of PWIs were able to restore "order" to campuses by ending student protests (Sutton & Kimbrough, 2001). Patton et al. (2011) assert, "the concessions that many PWIs offered during the student protests resulted more from their desire to reestablish normalcy and silence dissent rather than from a sincere desire to ensure that students of color felt welcomed and supported" (p. 71). Additionally, establishment of cultural centers allowed campus leaders an opportunity to ignore core issues of systemic racism and white institutional privilege at PWIs by making the needs and concerns of BIPOC students the responsibility of cultural center staff. The establishment of cultural centers laid the groundwork for developing "specialized support services" for the expanding diverse student populations that were to come (Carodine et al., 2016).

The Addition of Multicultural Centers

The 80s and 90s saw the rapid diversification of racial and ethnic student population at PWIs (Hefner, 2002; Princes, 1994; Shuford, 2011). Around the same time, a report from the Commission of Minority Participation in Education and American Life made recommendations

that colleges and universities 1) create an academic atmosphere that nourished minority students, 2) create a campus culture that values the diversity minority students bring to campus life, and 3) aggressively recruit more minority students, administrators, and faculty (Commission of Minority Participation in Education and American Life, 1988). In order to meet these goals, institutions of higher education began to invest in the creation of Multicultural Centers (Sanders, 2016; Toya, 2011). These offices provided support services for a broad range of students who had historically been disenfranchised including those who identified as BIPOC, LGTBQ, women, first generation, international, and religious (Patton & Hannon, 2008; Shuford, 2011). More recently, some Multicultural offices have also started to provide services for non-traditional students, veterans, and students with disabilities (Carodine et al., 2016). Like the race specific centers that preceded them, Multicultural Centers help to reduce the sense of isolation, alienation, and lack of belonging faced by many marginalized students at PWIs (Patton, 2006; Shotton et al., 2010). Researches have reported that students of color consider these spaces "a safe haven," "a home away from home," "a place to talk about problems," and "an island in the sea of whiteness" (Jones & Williams, 2006; Patton, 2006; Princes, 1994; Turner, 1994). Multicultural Centers also provide a space for students with common challenges to connect and support each other (Patton & Hannon, 2008).

In addition to addressing the psychosocial needs of marginalized students, researchers have noted that Multicultural Centers also deliver multicultural education, and promote systemic change that fosters a multicultural perspective across campus (Shuford & Palmer, 2004). Additional services provided by Multicultural Offices may include mentorship programs, advising, academic support, support groups, leadership skill building, and activities designed to promote personal, social, and career development (Shuford, 2011; Sanders, 2016). Though they

may vary in structure and charge from one institution to the next, the primary purpose of Multicultural Centers is to advocate for the personal, academic, and social development of students from underrepresented populations (Cox, 2001)

In a chapter outlining multicultural affairs and special support services on college campuses, Carodine et al. (2016) asserted that the missions of multicultural offices should: (1) provide support for underrepresented student populations in a culturally aware manner, (2) provide multicultural awareness through social justice training and intercultural group dialogues geared towards the entire student population, and (3) promote systemic institutional change that fosters a multicultural perspective across the campus. Additionally, the Council for the Advancement Standards for Higher Education (CAS) has identified programming and service goals for multicultural offices that are designed to (1) promote personal growth of students by enhancing students' understanding of their own culture, heritage, and identities, (2) enhance students' understanding of cultures, heritages, and identities other than their own, (3) support students in efforts to advance their intellectual, career, social, ethical, and social justice development, (4) provide opportunities for students to establish satisfying interpersonal relationships, and (5) provide opportunities for interaction, exchange of ideas, and reflection that will acknowledge students' presence and support their goals and aspirations (CAS, 2019).

Even with all they contribute to the campus community, Multicultural Centers are still challenged by perceptions of institutional relevance (Toya, 2011). However, they continue to persist. The most recent survey to date regarding multicultural student services noted 80% of respondents associated with the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) indicated that their campus had an office dedicated to multicultural student populations (Stewart & Bridges, 2011). Given both the social and academic goals associated with Multicultural Centers, leaders

in this area must have a diverse awareness and understanding of the challenges various

marginalized groups face, an understanding of institutional resources, and an ability to address

the institutional barriers that impede their students' progress. In the next section, I provide a

detailed review of the role of Multicultural Directors at PWIs.

<div align="center">**Multicultural Directors**</div>

Multicultural Directors are typically classified as mid-level administrators within Student

Affairs. As such, they are responsible for the direct supervision of professional staff and

completing various administrative tasks (i.e. budgeting and strategic planning) while also

reporting to a senior or executive level administrator (Mather et al., 2009; Stewart & Bridges,

2011). Currently, universal agreements on the role and responsibilities of Multicultural Directors

do not exist; however, results of a survey conducted by Stewart and Bridges (2011) regarding

multicultural student services indicated that the primary responsibilities of multicultural services

leaders consisted of (1) multicultural programming, (2) student advising and consulting with

senior level administrators on multicultural student issues, and (3) conducting professional

development for faculty, staff, and other constituents. It should be noted that these

responsibilities were listed as primary to the Multicultural Director role prior to the widespread

existence of Chief Diversity Officers and other senior level positions (Nixon, 2013). Sutton and

McCluskey-Titus (2012) contributed to this list by noting responsibilities to recruit and retain

students from underrepresented backgrounds, help to resolve and manage conflict, serve as

mentors and advocates for underrepresented students, and advise student affinity groups.

Additionally, the Council for the Advancement Standards for Higher Education asserts that

Multicultural Directors create a vision for the functional area, influence others to contribute to

the effectiveness and success of the unit, develop and empower new leaders from within the

<div align="center">41</div>

organization, and collaborate with colleagues and departments across the institution (CAS, 2019). Finally, due to their association with students involved in programs in their centers, Multicultural Directors have an intimate knowledge of the campus climate (Conerly, 2017). Consequently, Sutton and McCluskey-Titus (2012) note that campus administrators routinely rely heavily upon multicultural leaders when ethnic/racial minority and other underrepresented student populations express dissatisfaction with institutional issues or during incidents of racial tension on campus.

In an article regarding Black Cultural Centers, Patton (2006) advised that Directors have an awareness of the Black student experience in higher education, knowledge to provide support to the Black student populations, and historical and present knowledge on the relevance of Black Cultural Centers. Directors should also have a defined presence among the Black student population as well as the ability to assess Black student needs and evaluate the variety of programs and services that are offered on campus. Though designed with the needs of Black students in mind, these same recommendations hold relevant for those serving multicultural populations.

Othermothering

While not a formal part of their job descriptions, a review of the literature revealed how the practice of othermothering might specifically impact Black Women who serve in the Multicultural Director role. Othermothering refers to a tradition in the Black community of caring for and supporting children regardless of their biological connection that dates back to slavery (Collins, 2000). In relation to higher education, this concept could be used to describe the relationships Black Women Multicultural Directors develop with the students of color they serve. Researchers have noted that Black Women mid-level administrators tend to be more

student centered and personally invested in the lives of their students in comparison to their white or male counterparts (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Hirt et al., 2008; Smith, 2018). Black Women mid-level administrators often become maternal figures to their students sharing personal stories and reveling in their students' success (Alexander-Lee, 2014; Mawhinney, 2011). This sentiment was expressed by a participant in Smith's (2018) dissertation concerning Black Women at the intellectual borderlands. Regarding students at her institution, the participant states, "Students are like our family. It's very familial, and I think Black Women take it on probably the most. So, there's the overwhelming feeling of that – like it's a lot, to have hundreds of students who are your children, right? But it's also the beautiful space" (Smith, 2018, p. 145).

Othermothering can include activities such as being a mentor, engaging students in and outside of the classroom, being present at campus social activities, and counseling students on personal and academic issues (Arjun, 2019). While Black Women Multicultural Directors may find these relationships fulfilling, it should also be noted that they go far beyond providing students with basic support and can take an added emotional toll (Arjun, 2019).

Positionality

The multifaceted role of a Multicultural Director is further complicated by mid-level positionality. As mid-level administrators, Multicultural Directors have the "formidable role of bridging the gap between university policymakers and frontline staff" (Mather et al., 2009, p. 244). However, their ability to meet this expectation is often hindered by a lack of specific directives on execution or implementation (Hibbler, 2020). Additionally, mid-level administrators have the opportunity to promote change on campus by serving on and chairing a variety of committees that allow them to inform campus policies and influence institutional

culture (Thomas, 2001). When considering Black Women in this role, it is important to note how the intersecting oppressions of race and gender might affect their contributions; though vital, their voices may not always be valued (Conerly, 2017). Even more disheartening, Mather et al. (2009) asserted there is a lack of support mechanisms for university administrators in mid-level student affairs roles. This is especially significant for Multicultural Directors who are working in part to create "an institutional community climate of justice, access, and equity" (CAS, 2019, p. 353) in an increasingly divisive and antagonistic environment regarding issues of race and social justice (Fuchs, 2020; Mwangi et al., 2018; SPLC, 2020). In all, the mid-level positionality of Multicultural Directors represents significant concern for Black Women who serve in these roles considering the nature of their duties and what we already know about the varied professional and personal challenges they face.

Summary

This review of the literature provided context for my study regarding the lived experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors. I began with an overview of Black Feminist Thought, I then discussed the culture at PWIs, and examined how slavery and a history of racist and sexist exclusion cemented white supremacist ideology at institutions of higher education in the United States. Next, I synthesized how gendered racism, isolation, and tokenization have created challenges for Black Women in U.S. society with specific note to their roles as administrators within higher education. Finally, I explored the history and purpose of Multicultural Centers at PWIs and examined the complicated facets of the Multicultural Director role. In the next section, I outline the research design for my study.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

I'm very Black, Black, Black
Can't send me back, back, back
And that is all I, that is all I know.

Jamila Woods, 2016

I use these lyrics by singer and activist Jamila Woods to provide insight as to how I made

decisions regarding the frameworks and research paradigm for this study. Primary in the creation

of a study embedded in and reflective of a Black feminist consciousness is the requirement that

the researcher remain cognizant of their responsibility to other Black Women throughout the

course of the research process. It is, as Dillard (2000) states, "*research as responsibility,*

answerable and obligated to the very persons and communities being engaged in the inquiry" (p.

663). With this in mind, the following sections discuss how the epistemological framework,

research paradigm, and data collection/analysis methods reflect this responsibility. The chapter

concludes with a discussion of research trustworthiness and ethical concerns.

Epistemological Framework

The hashtag "BelieveBlackWomen" that began trending on social media in 2016 speaks

to the overarching issue of Black Women having to work harder for their voices to be

acknowledged and believed. That Black Women need a rallying cry is unsurprising, as what have

traditionally been considered valid forms of obtaining knowledge in the United States have been

those epistemologies and paradigms created and controlled by elite white men who have

historically subscribed to pervasive notions of Black Women's inferiority (Collins, 2000).

Consequently, the voices and experiences of Black Women have been and continue to be

dismissed as valid serving to confirm the assertion (Collins, 2000) that epistemology is not just an "apolitical study of truth" (p. 252). In fact, epistemological choices in research determine "whom to trust, what to believe, and why something is true" (Collins, 2000, p. 252). As an epistemological framework, Endarkened Feminist Epistemology (EFE) addresses the issue of invalidation by asserting as its fundamental core the validity of Black Women's ways of knowing; thereby establishing Black Women's stories, voices, and experiences as legitimate data to be trusted and believed. In exploring the lived experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at PWIs, I choose to follow the lead of other Black Women researchers (Cokley, 2020; Collier, 2017; Dillard, 2000; Green, 2017; Johnson, 2015; Williams, 2020) who embedded their inquiries in an Endarkened Feminist Epistemology defined by and for Black Women. In describing Endarkened Feminist Epistemology, Dillard (2000) stated,

> I use the term endarkened feminist epistemology to articulate how reality is known when based in the historical roots of Black Feminist Thought, embodying a distinguishable difference in cultural standpoint, located in the intersection/overlap of the culturally constructed socialization of race, gender, and other identities and the historical and contemporary context of oppressions and resistance for African American Women. (p. 662)

Dillard (2000) outlined six assumptions for an Endarkened Feminist Epistemology:

Assumption 1: Self-definition forms one's participation and responsibility to one's community.

EFE emphasizes the responsibility the researcher has to the community in which they are inquiring. Being a Black Woman who had previously served as a Multicultural Director at a PWI made me uniquely qualified to engage with other Black Women around our lived experiences in the role. Through both lived experience and academic research, I understood the history of

disregard associated with Black Women's thoughts and ideas (Collins, 2000). Utilizing an EFE, required me to be intentional in seeking understanding and making meaning with those who participated in my study. Further, I had an obligation to honor each of my sistas' experiences and to report them as valid.

Assumption 2: Research is both an intellectual and a spiritual pursuit, a pursuit of purpose.

Researchers who ground their work in EFE realize a goal beyond knowledge production. Dillard (2000) noted,

> An endarkened feminist epistemology draws on a spiritual tradition, where the concern is not solely with the production of knowledge (an intellectual pursuit) but also with uncovering and constructing truth as the fabric of everyday life (a spiritual pursuit). (p. 674)

As such, I paid close attention to the spirit and psychological well-being of the Black Women in my study. The relationship between myself and the women who participated in the study was reciprocal and grounded in an ethic of care that recognized emotions as relevant in defining the legitimacy of an argument.

Assumption 3: Only within the context of community does the individual appear (Palmer, 1983) *and, through dialogue, continue to become.*

Dillard (2000) believed that dialogue was integral to both conducting research and assessing knowledge claims. She stated,

> There is value in the *telling*, in invading those secret silent moments often unspoken, in order to be understood as both participating in and responsible to one another as researchers. Further, there is value in being connected, in seeking harmony and wholeness as a way to discern ''truth' (p. 675).

Through sharing their stories, the Women who participated in the study were truly *seen* by each other, using dialogue to connect, be vulnerable, and speak their truths.

Assumption 4: Concrete experiences within everyday life form the criterion of meaning, the "matrix of meaning-making" (Ephraim-Donker, 1997, p. 8).

Black Women's everyday experiences provide us [Black Women] with knowledge and ways to make sense of our lives. However, Collins (1990) explained that knowledge (knowing something) is different than wisdom (the perspective and ability to make sound judgements based on that knowledge). It has been Black Women's ability to differentiate between the two that has been key to our survival (Collins, 1990). This study was designed to provide a space for Black Women Multicultural Directors to share both their knowledge and wisdom acknowledging that "knowledge without wisdom was adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the subordinate" (Collins, 1990, p. 208).

Assumption 5: Knowing and research extend both historically in time and outward to the world: to approach them otherwise is to diminish their cultural and empirical meaningfulness.

An EFE acknowledges the reasons why Black Women have been historically left out of the traditional system of knowledge production and simultaneously works to provide the missing perspective while also highlighting our viewpoints through the inclusion of Black Women's voices in current research. In alignment with EFE, this study centered the voices of Black Women Multicultural Directors in response to their absence in the research (with the recent exception of Johnson, 2021), while also extending the literature on Multicultural Directors to provide the inclusion of a Black Women standpoint.

Assumption 6: Power relations manifest as racism, sexism, homophobia, etc., structure gender, race, and other identity relations within research.

While Black Women constitute the largest group of racially minoritized administrators in the field of higher education, the "racist, sexist, and classist structures and belief systems" around them remain mostly unchanged (Dillard, 2000, p. 677). This study sought to disrupt those systems by stressing the intersectional oppression at the crux of how we understand and experience the world as Black Women; while also providing a perspective that revealed how these systems played out in the lives of Black Women Multicultural Directors at PWIs. As a collective, these six assumptions underlie the definition of truth that guides this study.

Research Paradigm

Critical theories such as BFT strive to change how people think by ensuring that marginalized voices are witnessed (Creswell, 2007). By sharing their stories, participants may experience a raised level of consciousness (Guba, 1990) that helps to reveal social structures of oppression (Bhattacharya, 2017). Qualitative research provides methods to aid researchers in attaining these goals. Clemons (2019) noted, "When qualitative research and Black Feminist Thought come together, we see a methodological practice that works to increase the level of understanding among researchers and participants" (p. 2). With the recent exception of Johnson (2021), who focused on the experiences of Black Women working in a variety of diversity-related roles at four-year PWIs, the stories of Black Women Multicultural Directors at PWIs have been absent from the literature. This critical qualitative study was designed to gain a detailed understanding of their lived experiences using qualitative research methods that highlight both the individual and group standpoint of the participants (Creswell, 2013). As a Black feminist researcher, it was incumbent upon me to design a study that used relevant methodological and data collection/analysis methods to illuminate the lived experiences of the women in my study. As such, themes of Black Feminist Thought were utilized in the creation of

research questions, interview questions, and journal/sista circle prompts. The following section provides a roadmap to understanding the makeup of my study.

Sister Circles

Sister circles are support groups that build upon the existing friendships, familial relationships, and sense of community found among Black Women (Neal-Barnett et al., 2011). Emerging in the late 1800s in response to the exclusion of Black Women from social clubs created by white women and Black men (Giddings, 1996), sister circles represent a long history of Black Women coming together to discuss and challenge racism and sexism while also uplifting themselves and their communities (Giddings, 1996; Johnson, 2015). In this study, sister circles were used for members of a collective society; Black Women Multicultural Directors, to gather and discuss their experiences at predominately white institutions.

Sista Circle Methodology (SCM)

The translation of sister circles into a culturally relevant, gender specific research methodology was conceived by Latoya Johnson in 2015 (Johnson, 2015). In her dissertation, Johnson (2015) stated the goal of SCM was to "gain an understanding of a specific issue, topic, or phenomena impacting Black Women from the perspective of Black Women themselves" (p. 45). As a methodology, sista circles minimize the traditional distance between the researcher and the researched (Collier, 2017; Dillard, 2006; Johnson, 2015) and create opportunities for open dialogue regarding Black Women's "truths" (Dunmeyer, 2019). In reference to the spiritual pursuit of research, sista circles inherently provide Black Women with support, knowledge, help, and encouragement (Boyd, 1993; Giddings, 1984; Neal-Barnett et al., 2011). Though a fairly new methodology, SCM has already been used by Black Women scholars to conduct research regarding Black Women teachers (Dunmeyer, 2020; Johnson, 2015), doctoral students (Collier,

2017), graduate students (Lacy, 2017; Green, 2017), undergraduates (Watkins, 2017, Wilson, 2018), mothers (Williams, 2020), middle school students (Cokley, 2020), and student affairs mid-level administrators (Nathan, 2021).

Distinguishing Features of Sista Circles

Because of their shared similarities, one might contend that sista circles are the same as focus groups. However, the methods differ in significant ways. First, because sista circles acknowledge the social and cultural relations of Black Women, the researcher is considered part of the group as opposed to a detached observer in a facilitative role (Hennink, 2014). Second, sista circles are designed to provide support and stimulate empowerment (Johnson, 2015). Johnson (2015) outlines the aforementioned features and a third: communication dynamics, in distinguishing sista circles from other methodologies.

Researcher as Participant

Sista Circle methodology is unique in that it situates the researcher as an active member of the community in which they are examining. In doing so, sista circles allowed me the opportunity to both obtain and contribute knowledge regarding the experience of Black Women Multicultural Directors. In this way, I was able to participate in a reciprocal relationship with the women in my study. This feature is noteworthy in that it celebrates a culturally relevant practice of sharing knowledge between the researcher and participants that has been historically devalued in western research practices (Dillard, 2006; Johnson, 2015).

Centrality of Empowerment

Johnson (2015) stated, "Black Women in sista circles empower one another through the sharing of their wisdom and experiences" (p. 48). As a member of the shared experience of Black Womanhood in the United States, the significance of this statement cannot be understated.

When one is empowered they become stronger and more confident (Oxford Languages, 2020).

This feature of SCM feels especially relevant in light our knowledge of the "chilly" climates

Black Women experience at PWIs. In effect, by using SCM in my study, there is an opportunity

for sistas to spiritually gain something they can take with them beyond their participation.

Communication Dynamics

SCM invites Black Women to "come as they are" acknowledging our tendency to switch

between using Mainstream American English and Black English Vernacular (Johnson, 2015).

Richardson (2003) noted that the language practices of Black Women "reflect their socialization

in a racialized, genderized, sexualized, and classed world" (p. 77). Hooks (1994) elaborated on

this point when she wrote, "We [Black Women] make English do what we want it to do. We take

the oppressor's language and turn it against itself. We make our words a counter-hegemonic

speech, liberating ourselves in language" (p. 175). In researching the common language among

Black Women, Haddix (2012) noted a shared understanding of things left unsaid. Language,

facial expressions, and gestures are all important ways of communicating that we use to make

sense of ourselves and others. SCM emphasizes the importance of these various forms of

communication in research because as a Black Woman, language "is not just what you say, but it

is what you perform, what you represent, what you interpret, what you be" (Haddix, 2012, p.

171). Collectively, these three features represent ways of knowing that have been dismissed by

dominant methodological practice, but that represent and augment significant ways of knowing

for Black Women.

<div align="center">

Recruitment and Selection

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Because Black Women Multicultural Directors are the focus of this study, I used

purposeful, criterion-based sampling techniques with the goal of recruiting four to six

participants (including myself). This mirrors the number of participants other Black Women scholars have selected when using sista circles as the primary mode of data collection (Wilson, 2018; Dunmeyer, 2020; Johnson, 2015). To be eligible for the study, participants had to meet the following criteria: 1) previously have served or currently serve as a Multicultural Director at a PWI for the duration of at least one year between 2015 and 2021, 2) have a minimum of five years working within student affairs, 3) identify as a Black Woman, and 4) have access to a web camera in order to participate in data collection.

After receiving IRB approval from Colorado State University (Appendix A), I emailed and posted recruitment fliers (Appendix B) through several of my existing professional networks. These included: the 2016 Colorado State University Higher Education Leadership (HEL) Cohort, the Multicultural Student Services Director Council (MSSDC), the Women of Color Directors Network Facebook group, and the PhinisheD/FinishEdD Facebook group. These networks were selected based on personal, past, or current membership and included professionals who could share the call for participants (also called sista colleagues, sista Multicultural Directors or sistas) within their own personal and professional spheres.

Potential sista colleagues were asked to contact me regarding their interest so that I could email them a short demographic survey to determine their eligibility (Appendix C). Eligible sistas were admitted to the study on a first come, first served basis. My first round of recruitment garnered three eligible sista colleagues. Because I had an original goal of recruiting four to six participants (including me), I could have ended my search for participants; however, I decided to repost the materials in an effort to recruit at least two more sista colleagues. During the second round of recruiting, I added one new sista colleague. After confirming four eligible sista colleagues, I emailed them each a link that allowed them to review and sign a consent form that

explained the purpose, process, and ethical considerations associated with the study (Appendix D).

Data Collection

Data collection for the study consisted of individual pre-interviews, three sista circles, weekly journal entries, and individual post-interviews. All interviews and sista circles were conducted over the *Zoom* platform providing for both audio and visual recordings. *Zoom* also provided a heathier alternative to meeting in person (in deference to national Covid-19 precautions) and allowed me to recruit sista colleagues from all over the country.

Pre-Interviews

Pre-interviews followed a semi-structured format comprised of several open-ended questions (Appendix E). The pre-interviews served several purposes: first, they provided a way for me to get to know each sista as an individual before starting the sista circles; second, they set the stage for the type of topics the sistas could expect to discuss in the sista circles; thirdly, meetings allowed us to share relevant background information that provided additional insight regarding their interest in the study; finally, I used pre-interviews as a means to establish trust and comfort (a hallmark of qualitative research) with each sista (Saldaña & Omasta, 2016). Sista colleagues were emailed the pre-interview questions 24-hours prior to our scheduled meeting so they would have an idea of what we would be discussing. I had allotted 90 minutes for each pre-interview; however most lasted about an hour. I met with one sista colleague twice in order to allow enough time for her to address all of the interview questions. Once all of the pre-interviews had been conducted, I sent an email outlining the dates and times of sista circle meetings as well as information for the teambuilder we would be engaging in during our first sista circle.

Sista Circles

The primary source of data collection for the study were three Sista Circles scheduled from 2:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. PST, over the course of three consecutive Sundays. The time and dates were determined based on sistas' preferences and with intentionality regarding geographical time differences. Discussion topics for weekly Sista Circles were designed to answer the overall research and sub-questions concerning the experiences of Multicultural Directors at PWIs and intentionally contained themes and elements of Black Feminist Thought. During the first sista circle, we engaged in a teambuilding exercise, in the two following circles we centered ourselves in the space by participating in brief check-ins regarding how we were doing and how our weeks had gone. During sista circles two and three, sistas were given space to revisit any lingering questions/comments from the previous circle. In addition, two ten-minute breaks were built in at the 60- and 90-minute mark of each sista circle.

The first sista circle was themed around research question 1a: How do Black Women Multicultural Directors describe the everyday experience of the professional being personal? Because it was our first sista circle, I took some time to discuss confidentiality and to provide a brief overview of my research methodology, epistemology, and theoretical framework. I also explained how I had come to decide on a research topic that illuminated the lived experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors. We also discussed the group agreements each sista had provided in her demographic questionnaire that would guide our time together in the sista circles. Acknowledging that this was the first time the Women were meeting as a collective, it was important for us to co-construct an environment in which each sister felt safe to speak her truth. After confirming the agreements that would guide our treatment of each other in the space, we dived right into a teambuilder. As both preparation for our subsequent conversation regarding

our experiences of the professional being personal and a way to situate the group in the current sociopolitical climate, I had asked each sista to come prepared to discuss, in any way they chose, the experience of being a Black Woman in 2020/2021. After everyone shared their response to the prompt, we engaged in a passionate discussion regarding personal moments we had experienced while serving in the Multicultural Director role, lived experiences that informed our work as Multicultural Directors, and our experiences leading multicultural offices during student protests and times of national/local unrest in response to racial injustice. The first sista circle ended with me forecasting the agenda for next week's circle and sharing three of Black feminist writer Morgan Jerkins' (2018) suggestions on how to survive as a Black Woman in the United States from her manifesto on paranoia and peace.

The second sista circle gave voice to the realities of our jobs by focusing on research sub-question 1b: What are the advantages/challenges of being a Black Woman in the Multicultural Director role? After checking in with each other, I started our discussion by asking the sistas to complete the following prompt: To be a Black Woman in the Multicultural Director role is to be…after each sista answered we engaged in a conversation around "other duties as assigned" associated with the Multicultural Director role. We then discussed what we had sacrificed while serving in the role as well as what we had gained. Afterwards, we engaged in an activity where we reflected on and discussed what we thought the job description for the "real" experience of being a Black Woman Multicultural Director would entail. I then asked the sistas what questions we had for each other regarding our experiences in the Multicultural Director role. The sista circle ended with me forecasting next week's agenda and asking each sista to give one word for what they would be taking away from engaging in our second sista circle.

The final sista circle focused on research question 1c: How did (do) you practice resistance and persistence in your role as a Multicultural Director? After starting with our usual check-in and confirming that there was nothing from last week's meeting the sistas wanted to revisit, I asked the sistas to share a moment in the role where they felt a shift or had a realization about how their gender/ race/ other salient identity intersected with their professional role as Multicultural Directors. We also discussed ways we had advocated for ourselves in the role. We watched two music videos from singer and activist, Jamila Wood (2016) and discussed how the lyrics and visuals for her songs "Black Girl Soldier" and "Holy" applied to our experiences as Multicultural Directors. We spent the last half hour of the sista circle writing and sharing words of appreciation for each of the women in the group. I ended the sista circle by thanking the women for their participation and providing information on how to schedule post interviews.

Online Journals

I emailed sistas each Monday after a sista circle to thank them for their engagement and to provide journal prompts for the upcoming weeks meeting. Journal entries included responses to journal prompts, personal reflections from participating in sista circles and the topics discussed, and anything else the sista thought relevant to share. The journals took the form of google docs that the sistas shared only with me. All of the sistas who participated in the study engaged with their online journals throughout the course of the study.

Post-Interviews

Post-interviews were scheduled approximately one week after our last sista circle meeting. Similar to pre-interviews, post-interview sessions followed a semi-structured format comprised of several open-ended questions (Appendix F). The interviews averaged 30 minutes

and provided sistas a space to ask questions and/or share any final thoughts on the research

study. We also discussed their final journal prompts.

<div align="center">**Data Analysis**</div>

I used thematic analysis (TA) to interpret the data collected for this study. TA is popular

among qualitative researchers due to its usefulness in identifying, analyzing, and interpreting

data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). TA was ideal because the process helped me to identify explicit

and underlying meaning within and across individual interviews, Sista Circles, and journal

entries in regard to the lived experience of Black Women Multicultural Directors at PWIs

(Clarke & Braun, 2017). When used in tandem with critical frameworks such as Black Feminist

Thought, TA can assist the researcher in interrogating oppressive practices and their

implications.

TA consists of a three-step procedure that relies on identifying codes, themes, and

patterns (Herzog et al., 2019). For this study, all individual interviews and Sista Circles were

transcribed via the *Temi* transcription service. I then engaged the data in the six-phase process

developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) that included familiarizing myself with the data,

generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing, defining, naming themes, and lastly

producing the report.

Familiarization with data consisted of repeated readings of transcripts and journal entries

as well as multiple viewings of the *Zoom* recordings. Morrow (2005) noted that "repeated

forays" into the data served the researcher in gaining a thorough understanding of the entire body

of data and their interrelated parts" (p. 256). The second step, generating initial codes was

essential as codes provided the necessary tools to locate the themes. Of specific cultural concern

for this study was the need to code for emotions. Coding for emotion offers insights into what

Collins (2000) calls the "inside" ideas that help Black Women cope with and transcend

intersectional oppression (p. 98). Additionally, when research is viewed as a spiritual pursuit in

addition to an intellectual pursuit as named in the second assumption of EFE, recognition of

emotions is considered not only appropriate but necessary in determining the validity of an

argument (Collins, 1990; Dillard, 2000). Coding for emotions was achieved in two ways: first, I

asked my participants to code their own pre-interview transcripts by reading through the

interview and pulling out any words or phrases that triggered an emotion for them. I then asked

them to name that emotion and note why it had elicited an emotional reaction. Next, I used "in-

vivo" coding to extricate data that "possessed a living quality" (Saldana & Omasta, 2018, p.

121). Because interviews and sista circles were both video and audio recorded, I was able to

review the videos for voice and physical cues indicating emotional moments that may not have

been as apparent through reviewing the transcript alone. Clemons (2019) noted that when

coupled with Black Feminist Thought, in vivo coding "allows the researcher to inductively

engage with the participant's narrative" (p. 19). After coding for emotions, I went back through

the data and coded for other important areas of interest, such as those that indicated a common

theme, significant realization, or alignment with BFT.

Emergent themes were defined through the lens of Black Feminist Thought, as a means

to answer the central research question: How do Black Women describe their experiences as

Multicultural Directors at PWIs? Once I identified the emergent themes, I returned to the data to

extract relevant quotes and stories. I also performed another review of the data to insure I was

not overlooking relevant information. The next phases of TA required me define and name the

themes. When naming and defining themes I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006)

recommendation that themes be catchy to draw the reader in. After reviewing the themes that

emerged for each sub-question, I decided to create theoretical constructs that summarized the themes and served to assist the reader in understanding the big-picture meaning conveyed by the data (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Finally, I used individual narratives and group discussions to write up findings. All quotes and stories utilized the sistas' exact words; however, some of the quotes combined thoughts from a variety of data points (i.e. interviews, sista circles, journals) in order to paint a complete picture. Morrow (2005) wrote,

> Just as numbers contribute to the persuasive "power" of a quantitative investigation, the actual words of participants are essential to persuade the reader that the interpretations of the researcher are in fact grounded in the lived experiences of the participants. (p. 256)

As a comprehensive analytical tool, TA provided the ability to analyze and present qualitative data in a manner I hope will be readily accessible to readers in and outside of academic communities (Braun & Clarke, 2014).

Trustworthiness

"Individuals who have lived through the experiences about which they claim to be experts are more believable and credible than those who have merely read and thought about such experiences."

Collins, 2000, p. 257

In this section I discuss how I plan to use authenticity criteria, subjectivity/reflexivity, and representational fairness throughout my study to ensure the data and analysis are honest and truthful.

Criteria Describing Authenticity

Lincoln et al. (2011) outlined five types of authenticity criteria that they believe constitute "authentic, trustworthy, and rigorous" qualitative inquiry; they include: fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity, and tactical authenticity (p. 122). Fairness requires that all stakeholders' views and voices be represented in the study. As a Black feminist researcher utilizing an endarkened feminist epistemology, it was of the utmost importance that the sistas in my study felt that their voices were accurately and adequately represented. Glesne (2016) recommended that researchers use member checking (the sharing of transcripts, interviews, etc. with research participants) to verify the trustworthiness of their data. With this in mind, I engaged the sistas in member checking by sending them each a draft of my findings and asking them to confirm that I had represented them truthfully.

Ontological and educative authenticity were designed as a way of determining raised awareness among the participants. Data collected for use in this study (i.e.- interviews, Sista Circles, activities, reflective journals) were designed to provide Sistas a more informed awareness and understanding of their lived experiences and the experiences of others. Through engaging in sista circles, the sistas created a space where we could share our stories and draw connections between our own experiences and those of other Black Women Multicultural Directors; these types of interactions are not only powerful but can aid in a deeper understanding of many of the challenges Black Women Multicultural Directors face (Clemons, 2019).

Catalytic and tactical authenticity refer to the ability of the researched inquiry (exploring the lived experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at PWIs) to prompt social action. How predominantly white institutions of higher education choose to utilize the information presented in this study remains to be seen. However, my main concern is with the women who

participated in the study. The use of sista circles as methodology proposes that sistas will be empowered to engage in further actions outside of the study if they choose (Johnson, 2015). It should also be noted, that by agreeing to have their personal experiences documented, the women who participated in the study were already committing a political act (Bhattacharya, 2017).

In addition to the authenticity criteria described by Lincoln et al. (2011), Patton (2002) presented a criterion specific to critical research; consequential validity, which assesses the degree to which research achieves the goals of social and political change. In response to this criterion, I designed the questions and prompts that served to answer the research sub questions to illuminate structural and social inequality by amplifying and searching for truth in the voices and experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors.

Subjectivity and Reflexivity

Because I was both the researcher and a participant in the study, it was imperative that I addressed issues of subjectivity and reflexivity. Although all research is subjective in that researchers consciously decide which data to use and which to discard; by using BFT to frame my study and Sista Circle Methodology to gather data, I am committed to embracing my positionality as "unapologetically political in purpose" (Morrow, 2005, p. 254). Researchers who ground their inquiries in Black Feminist Thought make a commitment to produce self-reflective work (Clemons, 2019). As a researcher who also acted as a participant in the study, I view my experiences and observations as a Black Woman Multicultural Director just as significant to the research process as that of the other participants. Evans-Winters (2019) asserted, "Black feminist qualitative research challenges the perception that research is or needs to be conclusively objective and alternatively presupposes that all scientific claims are subjective" (p. 20).

Because I engaged in research with other Black Women, I had to negotiate the experience of understanding "the other" while also being "the other." I addressed this concern by keeping a researcher's journal. The journal served as a tool for me to interrogate my experiences with Black Womanhood. It is important to restate at this point that Black Feminist Thought as a framework accounts for the unique makeup of Black Women's interlocking identities (i.e.-sexuality, ethnicity, socioeconomic status) precluding the existence of a homogenous Black Woman's standpoint. It was not only "okay" that my sistas described experiences that were different than my own, it was expected.

Representational Fairness

Villenas (1996) stated, "we [women of color] are both the colonized and colonizer, marginalized by the academy yet using the resources and tools of the academy to write about our own communities and, even more intimately, our own lived experiences" (p. 713). In acknowledgment of this fact, I employed triangulation, thick description, and member checking as strategies to assist in achieving fairness in representing participant viewpoints. Triangulation required the use of multiple data sources to achieve adequate variety (Morrow, 2005). In this study, individual interviews, sista circles and journal submissions increased the "richness, breadth, and depth" of the data (Morrow, 2005). Richardson (1997) proposed a more unorthodox view of triangulation in which the image of a triangle is replaced with that of a crystal that allows the researcher to see the data from different angles. This crystalized view provides the researcher with a "deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic" (p. 92) resulting in a situation where we inevitably know more, but ultimately come away with more questions.

Another way I attended to fairness was through use of "thick description." Thick description depicts a descriptive writing style that helps the reader to understand the context of

the researcher's interpretations (Glesne, 2016). Saldaña and Omasta (2018) noted that thick description provides a "written interpretation of the nuances, complexity, and significance of people's actions" (p. 31). Such description has been provided to aid readers in understanding the varied experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors which they may or may not personally identify with.

Finally, I practiced fairness in my study by engaging the sistas in member checking. This required me to share interview transcripts and drafts of my findings with participants in order to get their feedback on my interpretations. The use of member checking also increased the "truth value" of the study indicating that my understanding of the participants words was true to their intended meaning (Morrow, 2005, p. 256).

Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality was of utmost importance in this study. Therefore, each Sista was asked to choose a pseudonym that would be used to identify her throughout the dissertation. Institution types (i.e.- four-year public/private, community college) and geographic locations (i.e.- west coast, midwest, south) were named in the study, however specific institutions were not. Additionally, some of the data gathered for this study was analyzed in an aggregate form, (i.e. "Dear Black Woman Multicultural Director," "Other duties as assigned for Black Women Multicultural Directors") representing the collective voice of Black Women Multicultural Directors, further anonymizing participants. Because I used the *Zoom* platform as a tool to gather data, I was able to use the waiting room feature that allowed me to control who could enter the meeting. This was especially important in light of various incidents of "zoom bombing" in which unwanted, disruptive guests have infiltrated meetings. All zoom recordings, transcripts, data

notes, journals, and data analysis were stored on a password protected drive on my personal computer to which no other person has access.

Finally, although I foresaw only minimal risks to sistas who participated in this study, I realize that reliving negative experiences can take an emotional toll. As a precaution, I provided participants a list of available resources and offered to follow up with any sista who needed to "talk things through" outside of the sista circle.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided detailed information regarding the research design for this critical qualitative study. Informed by an Endarkened Feminist Epistemology and framed in Black Feminist Thought, this study used individual interviews, sista circle methodology, and journal submissions to describe the experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors employed at PWIs. Data interpretation was guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase process for thematic analysis. Trustworthiness of the data was assessed in accordance with the authenticity criteria developed by Guba et al. (2011). I also discussed how I, as both a researcher and a participant practiced (self)reflexivity. Finally, I engaged readers in a discussion regarding the fair representation of participants' viewpoints and overall ethical considerations for the study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction

I've been through it
They've been watching, tryna see
How I do it, how I've made it all look so easy
I've been working, twice as hard for half the love
Make it perfect, but they tell me that it ain't enough
You ain't ever walked in my shoes
You ain't ever do what I had to do
No, I didn't choose it, but I'm gonna use it, yeah

Rayana Jay, 2018

I used these lyrics by Jay (2018) to introduce the research findings because they

embodied so much of what was shared in our sista circles. In this chapter I introduce each sista

colleague using songs we feel described us best in our Multicultural Director role. Following the

introductions of the sistas who took part in this study, is an explanation of how I chose to

organize the findings. Finally, the chapter provides narratives and insight into the emergent

themes supporting the research questions.

The Sista Multicultural Directors

Alex

Alex served as a Multicultural Director at a small, private college in a southern U.S. state

for one year (within the required timeline). After experiencing numerous disappointments at

various institutions, Alex made the decision to leave higher education and the field of student

affairs. Currently Alex works for a non-profit on the east coast where she was recently selected

to serve as the inaugural co-chair of the equity, diversity, and inclusion advisory council at work.

Ultimately, Alex aspires to lead diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives for non-profits, corporate, or K-12. Alex identifies as a middle class, cis-gender, lesbian, who is also able-bodied. During our first interview, Alex reflected on why she felt inspired to participate in the study,

> As I have come into my own understanding of who I am, I realize I need to be involved with other Black Women who are doing this work and who are having these dialogues. I have assimilated for the majority of my life at PWIs and in predominantly white spaces and I'm tired of assimilating, so I don't assimilate anymore.

Fittingly, she believes the song that best describes her in the Multicultural role is Lion Babe's *Wonder Woman*:

<div align="center">

I ain't gonna break for that
I'm a Wonder Woman (watch out!)
I ain't gonna take all that
I'm a Wonder Woman (watch out)
You don't wanna go there
Trying to confuse me say I need you when I know I don't
That'll get you nowhere
Go on and try me you can't catch me you just blowing smoke

</div>

Autumn

Autumn served as a Multicultural Director for students in the health colleges at a large, research institution in the southern region of the United States for four years (two of which encompassed the required timeline). She currently holds a leadership position in the community college system of a different state. Autumn is a wife, a mother to her young son, and a Christian. Additionally, she identifies as heterosexual, able bodied, and middle class. During our pre-interview, Autumn noted being a Multicultural Director has been her favorite position of all the jobs she has had; however, it has also been the most taxing.

I feel like working in the health college added another layer to the work that made the

role even more difficult because I dealt with a lot of elitists in that area (doctors, nurses,

etc.) Just knowing how I struggled through the position made me feel like it was

important for my voice to be heard. I hope that by sharing our stories some aspiring

Black Woman Multicultural Director can feel comfortable in own truth and powerful in

the role from the very beginning.

When asked which song she felt best represented her in her role as a Multicultural Director, she

chose Jill Scott's *Golden,* highlighting the following lyrics:

> I'm holding on to my freedom
> Can't take it from me
> I was born into it
> It comes naturally
> I'm strumming my own freedom
> Playing the God in me
> Representing his glory
> Hope he's proud of me

Hazel

Hazel spent three years in the Multicultural Director role at a medium-sized community

college on the west coast (one of which fell within the required timeline). She currently serves as

a Dean within the community college system. A single mother of a young son, Hazel also

identifies as cis-gender, heterosexual, able-bodied, and middle class. Asked about her interest in

participating in the study, Hazel stated,

It's important to get our narratives out because we know that those are not the narratives

most people hear. People on a wider scale need to understand the challenges of this role

so that institutions can be more supportive of Black Women Multicultural Directors.

The song that she feels best represented her in the Multicultural Director role was the intro to

Kelis' *Bossy*:

<div align="center">
You don't have to love me
You don't even have to like me
But you will respect me
You know why? Cause I'm a boss
</div>

Marie

Marie was the only sista in the study to currently serve as a Multicultural Director. She

began her career as a Multicultural Director at a small, private, university in the midwestern

region of the U.S. where she served for one year and has continued on in the role at a large,

private, research university in another midwestern state (all within the required timeline). She

has served in her current role for five months. In addition to identifying as cis-gender,

heterosexual, able-bodied, and middle-class, Marie also holds pride in her status as a first-

generation college student. In responding about her interest in the study, Marie stated,

> This conversation is not readily available; I haven't seen it before. When you see people
>
> talking about their research and their data, it's rarely very specific to me, which is why
>
> it's really great to be part of the conversation and to be part of a cohort of women who
>
> are experiencing the same things I am, or experiencing different things and understanding
>
> what that experience is like for Black Women who run Multicultural Centers.

The song that best describes Marie in the Multicultural Director role is Solange's *Don't Touch*

My Hair:

<div align="center">
They don't understand
What it means to be me
Where we choose to go
Where we've been to know
</div>

Rashida

My time spent as a Multicultural Director and reason for creating this study has

previously been outlined in the researcher's perspective. I am currently an independent Diversity,

Equity, and Inclusion consultant and a full time PhD candidate. Like the rest of the sistas in this study, I also identify as middle-class, cis-gender and able bodied. In regards to sexual orientation, I identify as heterosexual. The song that most accurately describes me in the Multicultural Director role is *Black Girl Soldier* by Jamila Woods:

> But what they don't understand (but what they don't understand)
> But what they don't understand (but what they don't understand)
> But what they don't understand (but what they don't understand)
> See what they don't understand
> See she's telepathic
> Call it Black Girl Magic
> Yeah she scares the gov'ment
> Déjà vu of Tubman
> And she she she she she
> Don't give up
> Yea yea yea yea yea
> She don't give up
> She don't don't don't don't don't give up
> No no no no no
> She don't give up

The songs used to describe each sista Multicultural Director, as well as several others suggested by the sisters and used throughout this study can be experienced by clicking on the link at the conclusion of chapter 5.

Organization of Findings

This study investigated ways Black Women navigate the unique intersection of their race, gender, and professional roles within the confines of predominantly white institutions. As such, one research question and three sub questions guided the study.

1. How do Black Women describe their experiences as Multicultural Directors at PWIs?

   a. How do Black Women Multicultural Directors describe the everyday experience of the professional being personal?

b. What are the advantages/challenges of being a Black Woman in the Multicultural

    Director Role?

c. How do Black Women practice resistance and persistence in their roles as

    Multicultural Directors?

Each sub-question is attached to a theoretical construct that relays the overarching

summation of the related themes (Saldaña & Omasta, 2018). Emergent themes are listed under

each construct. Figure 1 provides a visual map for the research question, sub questions,

theoretical constructs, and emergent themes.
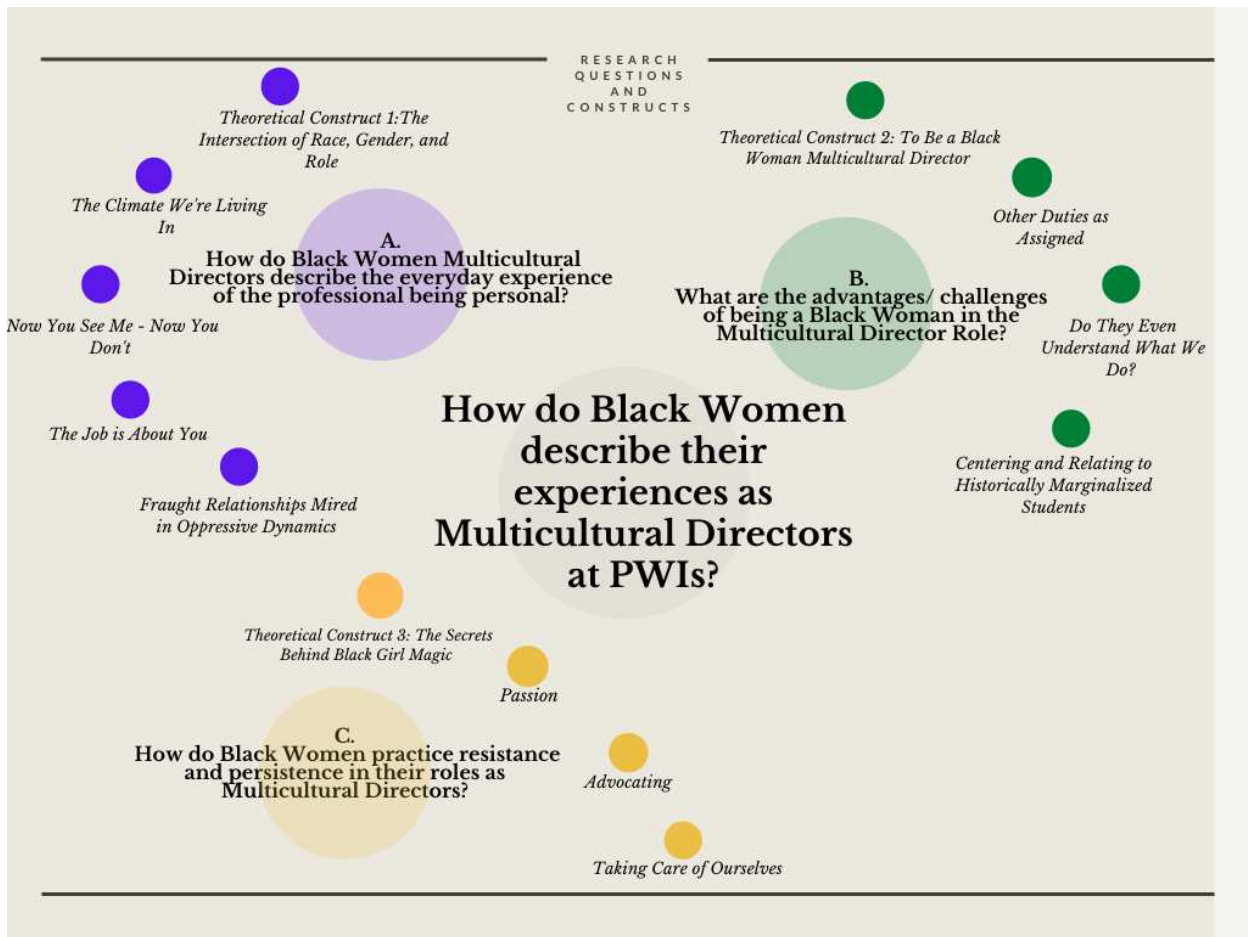
Figure 1

Research Questions and Constructs

Theoretical Construct #1: The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Role

The most obvious challenges Black Women administrators face in a racist and sexist society are the duplicity of their existence - race and gender (ASHE, Higher Education Report, 2009). In discussing the complexity associated the dual effects of racism and sexism Black Women experience throughout the course of their lives Autumn noted, "Whether or not I'm serving in the Multicultural Director role, I'm always feeling the intersection of my race and my gender. It never leaves me, it's built into my lived experiences." Four themes emerged from the

data to describe the intersection of race, gender, and role: *The Climate We're Living In, Now You See Me - Now You Don't, The Job is About You, and Fraught Relationships Mired in Oppressive Dynamics*. These themes and theoretical construct provide insight into the research sub question, *How do Black Women Multicultural Directors describe the everyday experience of the professional being personal?*

Theme 1: The Climate We're Living In

No story regarding the lived experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors can be adequately told without first acknowledging our sociopolitical environment (Johnson, 2015). Although only one of the sista colleagues was actively working in the Multicultural Director role during March 2021 when the sista circles were convened, because all of the sistas had worked in the role for at least a year between 2015 and 2021, each of them could describe the experience of working at a PWI during a time when an unarmed Black person who had been murdered by the police was a topic of national discussion. According to a Washington Post database that tracks fatal police shootings, 136 Black, unarmed people have been shot a killed by police between 2015 and 2021 (Police Shooting Database, 2021). It was also within this time frame when Trump's racist, sexist, and xenophobic rhetoric had stoked an increase in white nationalist groups and race-based hate crimes (SPLC, 2020). The sistas had all lived through 2020 and the first few months of 2021 where Trump's angry, racist rhetoric had culminated in an atrocious attack on the U.S. capital. Trump supporters, many of whom were carrying confederate flags and dressed in t-shirts with racist messaging, plotted to murder elected officials and actually killed a capital police officer. Therefore, it was no surprise that during our first sista circle, the topic quickly turned to how we had personally been affected by the ongoing state-sanctioned violence against Black people and divisive political climate. In discussing the murders of Breonna Taylor,

George Floyd, and so many others, sistas expressed their ongoing anger, anxiety, fear, and worry regarding our personal safety and the safety of Black partners, relatives, and students. Highlighting the correlation between work and home, Marie noted,

> This is one of the places where I clearly see the personal as professional piece because I'm constantly worried about my husband making it home and at the same time trying to check in on my students to make sure they're okay. I'm worried about how all of this is affecting them and their families and how they're existing.

Marie went on to note how the worry and anxiety followed her wherever she went,

> I remember one-time last semester I was downtown buying cupcakes and I saw a ton of Trump flags on pick-up trucks and a bunch of people with Americana attire on and I found out that a Trump rally had just ended. I immediately contacted the president of the Black student organization on campus and was like, "don't come downtown. I don't know if you had anything planned or not, but just stay on campus tonight because this just doesn't feel like it would be a safe space for you to be in." You could just feel the vibe in the air. So, it's continually the experience of feeling that worry for myself and then wanting to guard my students from that experience. But I can't do that every single time.

The sistas agreed predominantly white spaces have always been unsafe for us, but the feeling had become heightened during, and now immediately following, Trump's tenure. Autumn confirmed this sense of increased danger and questioned what it meant for us to have to be in these spaces every day. Autumn revealed the ongoing stress had left her guarded, "I'm always thinking about how we are perceived in these spaces and how we have to protect ourselves."

We also discussed how Black Women Multicultural Directors continue to have to deal with these feelings while we are at work. Both Autumn and Hazel shared instances in which they came into work the day or weekend after another Black person had been unjustly murdered. Autumn remembered, "I was having a hard time dealing with it and it felt like the university didn't even care. No one was talking about it, no one was saying anything." Hazel added,

When everything was going down, none of my colleagues were calling and saying, how are you Hazel? How are things going? No one was checking on me as an individual. Then I realized, they're [non-Black colleagues] not constantly thinking about their families and the experiences that Black people are having around the country, but I'm here thinking about my nine-year-old son and my older brother and I'm worried about them because we are in a very white, very conservative part of the state.

Autumn continued the conversation stating,

When these types of national events happen, they impact everybody, but you know, we have the same shared lived experience as those who are being murdered. So, when you're in this type of position and you're a Black Woman, it's a very heavy load to carry.

Having our realities go unacknowledged made us feel unseen. It was as if many of our supervisors and colleagues believed the issues we dealt with outside of campus didn't affect us when we were at work. We noted how it was during these times, when the murder of Black people made the local and national news, that we were made to feel simultaneously invisible and hyper visible in our roles as Multicultural Directors. Autumn summarized the sentiment when she stated,

Our personal pain is not acknowledged; however, you want us to speak on it and use it as an educational moment for white people. Because I'm a Black Woman, you want to put

me on all these panels and have me participate in all these webinars. You want me to

share my experiences as a moment of growth for them [white people]. You barely know

my first name, but you want to know how I'm dealing with all this Black death.

Examples of dealing with being both invisible and hyper-visible in our roles as Multicultural

Directors also emerged in the second theme related to this construct, *Now you see me - now you*

don't.

Theme 2: Now You See Me - Now You Don't

With the exception of one sista who had not had the experience on her campus, everyone

else in the study noted times they felt most valued by their PWIs were in moments of student

unrest. After weeks, months, and (in some cases) years of us sharing the needs and concerns of

underrepresented students with senior level administrators and having those issues be ignored,

put on the backburner, or superficially addressed; students at four of our institutions decided to

engage in protest. It was in these moments that we seemingly became the most important people

on campus. Alex recalled her experience,

 I woke up one morning to a text from my boss telling me I needed to get to the office

ASAP. Apparently, the students of color were planning a protest and he wanted to know

what I knew about it before we went to a meeting with the President and various campus

stakeholders to discuss how the college would respond. Oh, now you need me. Now I'm

recognized, because there's a "problem" with the Black and Brown students. There were

probably 100 people in that room and only about five seemed to be people of color. The

meeting started and they directed most of their questions to me. Do I know the plan? Do I

know why this is happening? I didn't know the details, but I had a good idea, and I told

them, "It's because they're not being supported; they're not being heard." And I felt so

angry. I wanted to tell them, "they're protesting against y'all because you don't give a

shit." It's so visceral for me because I had been there trying to make change for a while

and they didn't care about me or my students until they got wind of a protest. The whole

meeting was frustrating because it just felt like a waste of time. They weren't really going

to do anything to change the situation. They just wanted to complain.

Alex ended up having to proofread and edit a letter that was only sent out to students of

color at the college. The entire experience left her feeling used an unappreciated.

I described a similar experience to Alexs' at my PWI:

I was getting pulled into meetings with people I had never been in the room with before.

Similar to Alex's experience, I was one of few or the only person of color in the room.

And suddenly, I was the smartest person there because they had no idea what to do. I just

reminded them of all the things students of color had been requesting for years. It was a

weird atmosphere, it's like they wanted me to provide them with a magic solution, but

they'd had plenty of time to address the students' concerns and had chosen not to. It was

also weird because some of them seemed nervous to even talk about the students, I think

a lot of them held their tongues because they realized that on some level, whatever they

were saying about students of color, they were saying about me.

In discussing her experience, Autumn noted,

The only time I felt somewhat acknowledged for my expertise was when they had what

they deemed a problem with the Black students. That's when they wanted to come over

and ask me questions. Those were the moments when they saw my position, when they

wanted to know what I thought. They came to me when they wanted to get the students to

settle down; like I was the Black student whisperer. And I found that very demeaning,

because I did so many other things that they never noticed.

Autumn was right. As Black Women Multicultural Directors, our work consisted of much more

than relaying student concerns. We also had to address our other job duties. Many of which were

intrinsically tied to our own personal identities.

Theme 3: The Job is About You

Everyone in the study talked about how we decided to apply for the Multicultural

Director position because of previous experiences of discrimination in and outside of our

undergraduate experiences. We wanted to make the experience for underrepresented student

populations at PWI's better. What many of us had not anticipated was how some of the tasks

required to achieve this goal would be so personally felt. Marie, Autumn, and I discussed some

of the experiences in which our work hit particularly close to home. Here is Marie discussing a

recent event that she had to spend time processing afterwards.

> A few weeks ago, our office hosted an affinity space for Asian Pacific Islander (API)
>
> students as a way to address the anti-Asian violence that has increased since COVID.
>
> Some of the students in that space used a lot of anti-Black rhetoric. In hosting and
>
> facilitating that space as a Black person, I realized that it was not my place to come in
>
> and teach. I'm hosting this space for API students to be together and to understand what
>
> their fellow community members are experiencing. I felt like I had to separate my
>
> identity from that conversation. It was really tough.

Autumn recalled a time where she assisted students at her institution in creating a very organized

and detailed call to action with the support of their fellow students of color in the health colleges,

It was a movement led by predominantly Black Women who put together this wonderful call to action. A few of the students had had some really horrible experiences in the health colleges and when they brought their complaints to the administration, nothing had been done about it. They had a list of 20 different structural changes they wanted to see happen. At the bottom of the list was the removal of a mural that depicted Black people picking cotton. The students took their demands to the president and he had a huge a town hall to address it; but in the end, the president just focused on removing the mural. He picked the low-hanging fruit. And I just remember how defeated those young Black Women felt because their voices had not been heard. They felt very dismissed because they had so many other important things on that list that weren't even addressed. I felt them in that moment. And it occurred to me, it was because it reminded me of how I was treated in the role and how so many times I'd tried to bring awareness to different things and been dismissed immediately, or maybe they only focused on one thing (the low hanging fruit) when I was trying to get them to focus on another.

Some of the times when the work felt most personal for me was when I was presenting on topics regarding equity, inclusion, and social justice. I remembered the first time I gave a classroom talk on white supremacy.

While I was presenting, and looking around the (mostly white) classroom, I had this visceral realization that I was talking about me. When I'm talking about white supremacy, I'm talking about my experiences and the experiences of students of color and other underrepresented students in this classroom. I'm talking about their experiences. When I'm talking about anti-Blackness, I'm inadvertently talking about how it has affected my life. Back when I was in academic advising doing a workshop about time management

and somebody didn't like the techniques or tools I was offering, I was like, okay, you don't have to use it; whatever, no skin off my back. But if someone told me, "I think people of color are being too sensitive" or "they're just making these things up;" that's personal for me, and because of my role, it's my responsibility to try to turn that into a learning moment.

Work that constantly requires you to reflect on your own identities while also trying to move the needle on social justice issues on predominantly white campuses can become even more complicated when you also have to deal with the power dynamics that serve to subjugate Black Women.

Theme 4: Fraught Relationships Mired in Oppressive Dynamics

Power dynamics that occur between Black Woman and Black men and white men/women exemplify the type of dualistic relationships hooks (1984) considered to be the crux of domination in western society. The dichotomous nature of these relationships requires that one side be inherently right so that the other becomes inherently wrong. Because these power dynamics are further embedded in white supremacist's patriarchal belief systems, Black Women always end up on the inferior side of the scale. The sista Multicultural Directors in my study described several instances in which oppressive dynamics had resulted in antagonistic situations and relationships. For Alex and Marie, some of the biggest obstacles they faced in their roles came from their Black male supervisors. Coincidentally, both of their former supervisors had previously worked in their positions before they inhabited the role. Marie and Alex both described relationships that showcased their supervisor's lack of trust in their intellect and capabilities; as well as a general sexist disregard that left both women wondering why they were

hired in the first place. Marie recalled how her Black male supervisor enacted perceived gender roles in their relationship when it came to advising students.

> When our male identified students had a need for support or consoling his approach was much more of this kind of tough love experience and needing to serve in this father figure position for them, whether they did or did not have a father in their life. And he only then brought them over to my office or suggested that they should talk to me if it was something where it was just too emotional for him and he figured they needed some more support from a mothering type figure in their lives. It was the same with female students. When he felt like there was a daddy issue kind of situation going on with how they were dealing with their situation, then he would be the person to come in and save the day and be the hero. And then I got to deal with all of the turmoil and the emotions that our female students were experiencing. That gender component really played a huge part in our relationship in terms of who was best fit to support our students from his lens. Whereas, I know in in my relationships that I have with students, I have the tough love conversations. I have the "okay, here's a tissue. Let's talk about it. Let's cry about it." Let's go through the full gamut. I was able to address all issues, not just one type based on my gender and perceived gender role.

Marie's supervisor devaluing behavior towards her continued up until her last days in the role. Here is Marie describing one of their last conversations as supervisor/supervisee:

> Before I left, I created a transition report. I was trying to prepare everything as well as humanly possible in regards to contacts, what stage contracts were in, who my go-to's were at certain times of the year, etc. I was preparing that not only for whoever was coming in, but for him; because even during the short time I had been in the role, I

had changed it. It had changed drastically. And so, I asked, "what is it that you

need from me as I'm continuing to wrap up?" And he was like, "now Marie, I did this job.

Don't forget, like I did this job for five years before you." And I was like all right, well

here you go, you can keep doing it because I'm done.

Alex recalled how the relationship with her Black male supervisor was problematic from day
one.

I walked in on my first day on the job and found my office trashed. There was trash all

over my office. The carpet was dirty and smelly and there were holes in the wall.

Last time I checked, when you start a new job and when you have a supervisor, part of

the role of a supervisor is to at least, prepare a welcoming office space for their new

employee. When I met with him later in the day I said, "I can't function in this type of

environment. I don't understand why I walked in to this place and it's not clean." And his

response to me was, "well, I didn't have time to do the work to get it cleaned for you."

Unfortunately, that was just the beginning of his oppressive and dismissive behavior.

During her time at the institution, Alex advocated for resources needed to support her

students. Alex created two proposals. The first was a proposal asking for additional financial

resources and office staff to support the students of color. Her proposal was never put forth to

upper administration. Her supervisor told her, "you can ask for things, but nothing is going to

change." The second proposal was created to condense several offices in her area to one after

the Director of the LGTBQ/Women's Center left to take another job. Again, Alex's request was

denied. Alex recounted,

I created a proposal that combined the Multicultural Center, LGBTQ Center and the

Women's Center. I would oversee all three centers and supervise two graduate students or

two coordinators that would come in. There would be two coordinators who would
support the work of all three of those centers. Even though I had expertise in all three
areas and supervision experience, he denied me again and admonished that it just "wasn't
the institution's way of doing things." It just illuminated the lack of value he saw in me.
In what felt like a slap in the face, the institution went on to hire a Black Woman
graduate student to run the LGTBQ and Women's Centers and did not give me the
responsibility of supervising her.

To no surprise, Alex counts him as one of the worst supervisors she has ever had and
believes he felt threatened by her because she refused to stay silent. Alex became visibly
emotional when recounting her story.

I was constantly battling these systems and these processes that were set up by the
institution and that were set up by my Black supervisor. It harmed me because he's a
Black dude and I expected more and I should have expected more and I should have been
cared for because we both exist as Black people in the world, but that did not happen.

While both Marie and Alex shared their experiences with Black men, Autumn shared her
most arduous relationships had been with three white women who served as Deans for
the different health colleges at her institution.

They gave me the most pushback out of anyone at the entire institution. They made my
job very hard. I needed student information from them so I could reach out to the
students. And they would say, "well, just tell us what you want to say and we'll send it
out to the students." No, you give me the information so that I can send it out to my
students and do some intentional targeting to students in the health colleges. I think it's
because before I got there, there was no one in this position trying to do a lot of the work

and be active in this role. And so those women had been able to do their own

multicultural stuff in their colleges that really was not having an impact. So, when I got

there with my team, we were doing some new things that they were not used to,

and they wanted to control the things that we did. We wanted to partner with them, but

we had done a lot of work getting these events and programs together and we wanted the

credit for what we were doing. I was trying to collaborate with them to get the students

involved, but they just weren't having it. And then they were also the ones coming to me

saying, "well, before you got here, we had access to all of this money to do X, Y, and Z."

Well, now I'm here, so you don't have that access "no mo."

My most antagonistic relationship was with a white male faculty member I had never

even met.

After sending a campus wide email advertising the Day of Absence/ Day of Presence

event, I received a **campus-wide** response from a faculty member I had never met. The

email derided the event, and suggested that I was oppressing white people by forcing

 them off campus. In my emailed **response to the campus**, I clarified that the event was

optional (as it had always been) and that no one was being forced off campus. Because he

seemed confused about the overall purpose of the event and practice of racial caucusing, I

invited him to come see me. He never responded to my email. Approximately fourteen

days after the Day of Absence/Day of Presence event, he went on Fox news and conflated

an unrelated student protest with the Day of Absence event igniting a shitstorm of hate

directed at me, my office, and the institution. To this day, I have never actually spoke to

him in person. Just goes to show the power of one offended white man.

These four themes sum up the main findings for my first sub-question regarding the

everyday experience of the professional being personal. Next, I discuss the theoretical construct and themes that emerged from the data related to the second sub-question: *What are the advantages/challenges of being a Black Woman in the Multicultural Director role?*

Theoretical Construct #2: To Be a Black Woman Multicultural Director

I started the conversation in our second sista circle by asking us to complete the following sentence: To be a Black Woman in the Multicultural Director role is to be… Candid responses identified the nebulous space Black Women Multicultural Directors might find themselves operating in at PWIs and encompassed a range of feelings about what colleges and universities might professionally refer to as "other duties as assigned" - the supposed "minor" tasks associated with the role that need not be stated (Maddingly, 2019). Further discussion of the topic revealed institutions of higher education seemingly lack understanding and support of the Multicultural Director role. Despite the myriad of challenges, we also identified what we regarded as a major advantage of being us in these roles: the ability to center and relate to historically marginalized students in predominantly white spaces. Themes related to this construct include: *Other Duties as Assigned, Do They Even Understand What We Do?, and Centering and Relating to Historically Marginalized Students.*

Theme 1: Other Duties as Assigned

Marie was the first to respond to the opening prompt. "To be a Black Woman Multicultural Director is to be someone who knowingly and unwillingly (sometimes willingly) has to save the world" or in this case, the university. Autumn immediately agreed with Marie and added, "To be a Black Woman Multicultural Director is to be taxed. The work can sometimes be grueling and emotional on a personal level, but then there's all the work you didn't realize the job involved." As previously discussed in the theme *Now You See Me -- Now You Don't,* Black

Women Multicultural Directors are some of the first called upon during moments of student unrest; however, Marie and Autumn's responses led us to reflect on some of the other expectations our institutions had of us. Hazel noted,

> It's assumed that Multicultural Directors know everything about all cultures. That we know everything about working with students from different backgrounds. We're seen as resources who have all this knowledge and are expected to be to be able to speak to [any issue regarding underrepresented students] immediately.

As Black Women, we also discussed how we found it easier to discuss Black culture and issues because they were our lived experiences. However, when addressing students from cultures that were different than ours and who encountered issues we were not familiar with, we had to put in the work to learn about them on our own and from others. The awareness we gained was learned and limited, not automatic and vast. Alex reflected,

> I honestly don't know how, particularly when we are by ourselves in the Multicultural Director role, how we are supposed to know about all the other different populations to the degree that's expected. I don't know if that's manageable unless you have the ability to hire staff that actually compliment your student body.

In her findings regarding the experiences of Black Women Diversity workers at PWIs, Johnson (2021), agreed with Alex stating, "Given the context of the environments of many of the participants, I believe it is almost impossible to effectively perform the job responsibilities of a diversity position as a Black Woman, unless you have a supportive team around you" (p. 140).

We also discussed the unrealistic expectations our institutions seemed to have related to the number of students we knew personally and how those students were feeling about every issue. Marie remarked on how the Multicultural Director is often viewed as the catch all for all

diversity, equity, and inclusion related issues at the institution. Autumn and I discussed how our roles were often "stretched" and not always within our comfort zones:

Autumn: Just because you were hired as the Multicultural Director to support underrepresented students and support their retention and things of that nature does not mean you have the skill set, willingness, or comfort to be going around facilitating DEI workshops for faculty and staff.

Rashida:

I agree. For most Multicultural Directors, our charge is to work with students, to create programming for students, but we get asked to do workshops and trainings for faculty and staff all the time. And so, we end up stretching beyond our roles. And because we're at PWIs there's often times not really a choice. I mean if we don't do it, who else will?

Autumn and Hazel shared how advising duties for student organizations added additional work to the other duties as assigned list. Autumn stated,

When you're an advisor, you're at the events at night and during the day you're helping them set up. And so, in addition to all the work you're doing as the Multicultural Director from your office, you're also having to dedicate time and energy away from your family, to help support these students who no one else feels the ownership of being in those roles.

Hazel agreed,

The student organization advising was also a thing for me because the way our institution did it, the faculty got first choice of groups to advise and if nobody picked an org up, then they'd scramble to find somebody to do it. A lot of times the faculty weren't interested in picking up the multicultural clubs and so those would come to me.

In considering how the formal duties and responsibilities of our roles had been multiplied by the responsibilities of "other duties as assigned "Marie offered,

While the multicultural office and Director role were originally created to provide advocacy, support, and resources for underrepresented students, it's now become a space and role to train the entire campus community around DEI issues. It's where we appease the need for our white students to feel like they're not racist, and to have spaces for them to become educated and for white staff and faculty members to have that same access. It's no longer just the advocacy that was specific for students of color. We're still advocating and supporting them, but now we're also supposed to be making sure that the campus is not racist.

Alex was next to answer the prompt and stated, "To be a Black Woman Multicultural Director is to be the token." Alex believed her institution had only hired her for show. She went on to state, "These institutions hire us to check a box. I have a Black Woman who is a Director of the Multicultural Center; so no, I'm not racist and sexist." Alex's assumption was congruent with those of several researchers who have noted how predominantly white institutions have hired Black Women in diversity related roles to appear inclusive (Ahmed, 2012; Niemann, 1999; Vargas, 2011). To Alex, the tokenization of the role could be clearly identified in the resource allotment for her office.

They hired me, but I didn't really have any resources to support me in my role. I had a $25,000 budget compared to the close to million-dollar budgets of the other Directors in our area. I had no coordinator, no administrative assistant, no student or professional staff. You want me to put students of color on the map at this college and to create a place where they feel at home, but you don't give me resources. And so again, yes, you

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hire us, but then you put us in these situations and these systems where, our hands are tied. For me, the lack of budget and resources caused me to feel tokenized.

The lack of resources that caused Alex to feel tokenized was also an issue for most of the other sistas. I noted,

Dealing with having a small budget in this role reminds me of how so often Black Women are forced to make a dollar out of fifteen cents and how we're so used to stretching things. So, it doesn't really surprise me that now in this role, in these institutions, we're doing the same thing. We work in perhaps the most under-resourced offices on campus. The institution asks so much of us as an office, but how are we supposed to do it without the resources? We just figure out ways, we come up with ideas.

I went on to discuss how after my first year in the Multicultural Director role I realized that the annual Multicultural graduation was always funded by whatever money was left in the budget by the end of the year. Sometimes we'd have snacks, sometimes we didn't, sometimes we'd have decorations, sometimes we didn't. And so, I started an annual 5k (the campus was on 100 acres) to raise money specifically for the graduation. Every year that I was there after that we always had a sit-down dinner and nice decorations so that our students and their families could have a nice event to celebrate and not just whatever we could do with what was left over from the budget.

Hazel reflected,

When I was a Multicultural Director, I learned ways to be creative and leverage funding. I built strong relationships with student organizations and other faculty on campus over the years so when necessary, I could just come to them and say, "Hey, I'd like to do this. Can you help me with the money on that?

Autumn's experience with resources was different,

> When I was a Multicultural Director, I actually had an abundance of resources. But even
> though I had a generous budget and a great team, I had all of these deans and faculty
> members who had the audacity to try and tell me what to do with my resources in my
> area, for my students who I knew the most about. I didn't need their approval to use the
> funds, but they had my boss's ear. [If I didn't give them the funds] my boss would call
> me and say, "Hey so and so needs money from your budget; so, can you work with
> them?" It was just always something stupid where I felt like I was never in control of my
> budget. Someone else was always dictating what I did.

Hazel was next to complete the prompt. "To be a Black Woman Multicultural
Director is to constantly be trying to stay a step ahead of everything. You have to always be
aware of things that might be coming at you." Hazel likened the situation to defensive driving,

> Being a Black Woman in this role is constantly thinking about, how are people going to
> react to my programming? How are they going to react to the email I just sent campus
> wide? Am I writing it in a way where it's getting to the point but it's not going to get a
> ton of backlash? And if I do get backlash, what am I going to say? It's constantly being
> aware of things coming at you from different directions, but also having to be a step
> ahead so that you can anticipate. It's a lot of mental calculus that I don't think others have
> to do.

Ahmed (2012) described the mental gymnastics of perpetual self-questioning Hazel
described as the process of continually "asking yourself what to do when there is an idea of you
that persist, no matter what you do" (p. 160). Hazel's situation was exacerbated by the fact that at
the time she was hired as a Multicultural Director, she was also a new mother.

When I started my role, my son was almost two. And so, being new to the institution and to the role, I spent a lot of time proving that I could handle it as a single mom with a baby. I actually didn't talk a lot about him [my son]. I tried to hide that fact because I didn't want people to think, "Oh, here's another statistic." But I also didn't want people to think that I couldn't do the job because of my family obligations. So, I'd go to evening events that the BSU was doing, or I'd answer my emails at night after he was sleep so I'd be all caught up. I had a lot of fear of what are people gonna think about me? Am I going to lose credibility?

Some of the thoughts Hazel shared around how fear of stereotyping affected her in the role caused Autumn and I to reflect on how we felt like we had sacrificed our authenticity in the role at times with unsatisfying results. I explained,

I think as Black Women, we learn very early on that you get to be your authentic self around your family and your friends. And then in professional spaces, you have to be your work self. And so, especially in this role, I felt like I had to turn the "professionalism" way up. And there were a lot of ideas in my head like "I have to say things this way so that people listen to me, I have to present this this way so that it moves forward. I can't sound too angry. I have to like temper my emotions; all these kinds of things that in retrospect were done to make me seem more palatable. Unsurprisingly, none of those attempts at palatable behavior got me very far when I was being personally attacked and needed public support from the college. I should have been my authentic self because at the end of the day, the people I needed to defend me were definitely their authentic selves.

Autumn agreed,

Looking back, I also sacrificed true authenticity; not feeling I could show up and say

what I needed to say without thinking through all these different ways to say it. But

even with that, I was still being perceived as aggressive. Whenever I would ask

for information, or try to partner with certain people or if I went to them

and tried to advocate for a student, it was never received in a way that was

helpful. It was always seen as me coming over to tell them how to do their jobs.

Marie described how the work she did to support students sometimes left her

feeling depleted.

I feel like day in and day out, I'm constantly thinking about how to support my

students. What's happening in the news that's going to affect them? I'm trying to

educate myself on their experiences. I want to know how are they are experiencing the

world because it's different from when I was in school.

The sistas also shared how the feeling of depletion that came from constantly

having to be in the know was intensified when the campus and the country were dealing with

various acts of racial injustice. We commiserated over how we rarely had time to process our

own feelings about violent and disturbing incidents before we were expected to process these

same events with students, staff, and faculty. We shared that processing these types of events

with community members, while intense, was also something we were used to doing; especially

with students. Marie and I highlighted how Black Women Multicultural Directors frequently

became impromptu counselors. I shared,

I did a lot of counseling for students when I was in the role. They would often

come to me with questions and ask for suggestions on how to have

conversations with their friends or families regarding some aspect of their

identity. I would listen to their concerns and their stories and would sometimes

suggest they speak to someone at the counseling center and they'd say stuff like,

"everybody over there is white, they're not going to understand. I know you, so

I'd rather just tell you." And I didn't feel like I could tell them no. If I was the

only person they had to talk to, then I felt obligated to listen and offer whatever

support I could. I don't think other directors on campus find themselves

counseling students as consistently and around as personal of topics as we

do in this role.

Marie reiterated,

I think this is especially true for students of color, because there's such a stigma

around asking for help and getting counseling. When they feel like they can

trust you, you become their person. Whereas I don't think that it's the same for many of

our white students on campus because the stigma just isn't there in

the same way. Because Black Women are inherently relational people,

counseling students just fits with how we lead.

Alex summed up our combined experiences of other duties as assigned (feeling taxed,

engaging in emotional labor, being asked to advise multiple groups, etc.) as a form of "Black

tax" in which Black Women Multicultural Directors had to work twice as hard in the role as a

white Director elsewhere in the institution because people of color were so sparse (Griffin et.

al, 2011). Autumn agreed,

This is especially true at a PWI where you may be the only Black person a lot of people

are aware of. Therefore, they [colleagues] are always trying to get you to be part of this

and that because they need that one Black face.

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In summary, I asked the sistas to consider what they would tell another Black Woman who was considering a career as a Multicultural Director what they might expect regarding other duties as assigned. Figure 2 surmised their answers.

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OTHER DUTIES AS ASSIGNED FOR BLACK WOMEN MULTICULTURAL DIRECTORS

- Create and facilitate million-dollar programming on a hundred-dollar budget
- Work with little to no resources to make shit happen
- Support other departments in need of "diversity"
- Know all the things about every underrepresented student population
- Calm these same students down when they notice injustices within the institution
- Build meaningful relationships with students, but remember at the end of the day you still work for the institution and we may interrogate you about what you know about said students if unrest occurs
- You are expected to extend yourself to everyone whether it falls within your job description or not
- You may become the impromptu voice of the college (behind the scenes) if there is a protest or major concern related to underrepresented students. Additionally, be prepared to advise on issues you've been telling us about forever and being asked to assist or actually write emails on behalf of the institution
- Be prepared to emotionally process events for yourself while also helping students, staff, and faculty process the same event
- Act as a therapist (Be prepared to hold a LOT of emotional weight)
- Provide maintenance for a building (décor, capital budget, upkeep, security)
- Sit on multiple hiring committees and serve as a DEI expert in terms of hiring and recruiting
- Must be able to continuously justify use of resources and impact on student retention and success
- Must be a politically astute leader
- Must be knowledgeable and capable of training all faculty, staff, and students as a campus-wide DEI facilitator
- Though your role is to support students from historically marginalized backgrounds, you may be frequently asked to create programming that also appeases those from more dominant roles in society
- Must have a master's degree or higher and fifty-leven years of experience in multicultural affairs, but your expertise may still be disregarded on a daily basis
- Has experience with educating senior leadership and faculty of the college on all things Black (particularly in times of peril)
- We actually might be looking for a CDO rather than a MD… so you may be asked to fulfill responsibilities beyond your Director level position without the increase in pay
- Must be able to assist faculty, staff, and students of color in navigating white superiority, white tears, and overall white supremacy in most spaces throughout campus
- You will be the campus liaison for all DEI related topics
- Convene listening circles and/or another restorative practice to mend damage done by community members (does not apply to harm done by the university)

Figure 2

Other Duties as Assigned

The discussion surrounding other duties as assigned led the Black Women in my study to ponder another question: Did our institutions even understand what we did every day?

Theme 2: Do They Even Understand What We Do?

The topic of colleagues and institutional leaders misunderstanding our roles engendered a lively conversation among the sistas. Autumn recounted, "the role is so multifaceted. We're helping students with academics, providing programming, listening to their personal concerns, providing advocacy, being the go-to when students engage in protest..." Marie interjected,

> We work with admissions on recruiting, we present at orientation and engage with students during the first-year experience, we do career counseling, mental health counseling, we serve as DEI facilitators and trainers for the campus, we're sitting on multiple search committees, assisting with alumni relations, fundraising, and working with advancement…

Autumn continued,

> When BIPOC and other marginalized students are facing challenges, they don't run to the admissions director. We see students through the entire life cycle. We do some of everything with students. I have to learn a lot about other areas of the college that other people do not. I helped students strategize. In other positions you don't have these experiences. And you're not the savior- you're the go to. That's why staff, faculty, and senior leadership come to you when they have issues with students who work with us. They [faculty, staff, leadership] may not know what you do, but they know that students look to you and that you can help them assist students. They will come to you and seek your support when they don't know what else to do. That's why this position is so different and so critical to the college.

Alex added, "not to mention, we're confronting our own stuff in the form of supporting students while also being discriminated against in our roles."

Autumn also added,

And even with everything we've mentioned, it seems like our expertise is still not truly respected. When my institution created a diversity, equity, and inclusion committee, I realized that they hadn't invited a lot of the people who were directly doing the work. I remember thinking, "why in the world would they not include me? I should be part of this committee." So, I went and talked to this white woman who had been put in charge of hand-selecting everyone and tried to get her to understand that I did this work every day; there was no reason why the committee should have been formed without having my voice at the table. I was always having to assert myself and remind people of what I did. No one seemed to understand my role. I was constantly having to define and explain it to people.

Hazel related to experiencing people's lack of knowledge around the role and wondered if it was because some institutions did such a poor job of defining it,

When I started in the role was there was so much ambiguity. They didn't really understand the concepts of diversity and multiculturalism, so there was nobody really holding clear expectations for what the job outcomes were or what I was supposed to do.

Autumn agreed,

One of my supervisors was a white man and I just don't think he really understood what the role was really about. He knew he needed my office on campus to support historically underrepresented students, but I think it was hard for him to commend me on the work that I was doing when he really didn't know what the work was supposed to be.

I followed up noting how an ignorance of the role and the purpose of the office directly affected the experience of Black Women Multicultural Directors.

How do you think you're going to have an office that's about social justice on a predominantly white campus and not have there be times where you need to defend the actions of that office? Those things don't go together. Equity, white supremacy and anti-Blackness are not objective topics. It's like the university wants you to be objective when issues around race come up; they want you to hear all sides, but these topics are subjective. There is no "all sides." It's one side that promotes equity, and there's another side that doesn't. It puts us in such a weird place as Multicultural Directors where our goal is to support underrepresented students, but the institution may want you to do and say things in a way that supports everyone although it's not everyone who needs to be supported. That kind of foundation actually sets us up to function in opposition to the institution.

To this argument Marie surmised, "The Multicultural Office is more than just support services for marginalized students. It is that plus a place where staff are having to fight the inequities of the institution while not biting the hand that feeds them."

While senior leadership and colleagues may not understand the complexity of our roles, there was one population that always "saw" us. It was the group that made it all worthwhile, and for many, were the best part of the job - the students.

Theme 3: Centering and Relating to Historically Marginalized Students

For most of the Black Women Multicultural Directors in my study, the best part of the job was the opportunity to center historically marginalized students in a predominantly white space. Because we shared some of the same identities as our students, planning events often

provided opportunities for us to also center ourselves, if only for a moment. Alex, Hazel, and I shared how being in the role allowed us to center Blackness. Alex shared,

> I understood what it felt like to be a Black student at an institution like the one I worked at because my undergrad was a liberal arts college. One of the things I am most proud of is bringing a Black Woman scholar to the campus for a week-long residency to highlight the needs and experiences of trans women of color and to discuss what PWI's could do to support them as one of the most marginalized populations on campus.

Hazel agreed there was a tendency to center the populations we were most familiar with because of our lived experiences. "I really enjoyed planning events for Black History month. It was an opportunity for me to focus the campus' attention on Blackness. I always had good events for February." My experience had been similar. I shared,

> I remember one year when I did this whole themed workshop series based on Beyonce's Lemonade album. I was so excited to shine the light on Black Women. For three Wednesdays in a row, (mostly Black) Women and a few staff members would meet for two hours to discuss music, books, and films written for and about Black Women. It was so meaningful to share that space with students at the college.

> Being a Black Woman Multicultural Director at a PWI also meant that you got to

spend a lot of your time on campus surrounded by other people of color who you likely had shared experiences with. You might have been the only Black person in meetings, but you were definitely not the only person of color in your office. Spending so much time surrounded by students of color nurtured deep, sometimes familial relationships. I noted,

> Being with students always made me feel comfortable. We would laugh and tell jokes and they would keep me up on all the new music and trends. They shared their stories

with me and I shared things about my life with them. It was a relationship where I could be authentic and I knew they would just get it.

Hazel shared,

Being a Black Woman gave me credibility with the students because they could see I was a person they could connect with. Sometimes I felt like a mother or older sibling, but mostly I just felt like a friend. I was able to push my students and hold them accountable for personal and academic goals. I shared my life with them because I wanted my background to inspire them. I wanted to be a role model so that they could see that for someone with similar identities, professional success was obtainable. And I viewed it as a reciprocal relationship; because our average age was 38, some of the students were older than me. So, I was learning from them just as much as they were learning from me.

Autumn explained her experience working with students,

They trusted me. I felt so much love in that position. Students were always in my office and I took care of them. Like Hazel mentioned, the relationship was definitely mutual. They took care of me too. They would often come let me know about incidents on campus as soon as they found out. I loved being the one students sought out to share good news and not so good news with. I was always supporting and encouraging them. They knew that I had their back, so it was very easy for them to come to me and share about a challenge they were having with a faculty member, or just something happening in their lives. When it came to the students, me identifying as a Black Woman definitely worked in my favor.

Marie stated,

I remember when I became "Titi Marie" to my students. It was this opportunity to

connect with students in a way that they felt was more relational, and built on the record

that we had established, which was great, because now there was this trust there; there

was this opportunity for us to move forward and I could mentor and support. I knew that

they would trust me to be able to advocate for them.

Alex had a different experience with students.

It was really rough. We clashed almost from the start. I think it was because the students

had become so accustomed to turnover in the Director role. I really wanted to center us

and make our building a focal point on campus, but the students didn't want that. They

were really frustrated and they should have been. They weren't being supported by the

counseling center and they weren't being supported by their faculty in regards to what it

meant to be [particularly] Black at this PWI in this extremely white area. They didn't

trust me because they already felt so unsupported by the institution.

Other Duties as Assigned, *Do They Even Understand What We Do?,* and *Centering and*

Relating to Historically Marginalized Students provided a deeper understanding regarding both

the challenging and fulfilling experiences of being a Black Woman Multicultural Director at a

predominantly white institution. The next section outlines the theoretical construct and

corresponding themes that serve to answer my third and final sub-question: *How do Black*

Women practice resistance and persistence in their roles as Multicultural Directors?

Theoretical Construct #3: The Secrets Behind Black Girl Magic

The term Black Girl Magic has been used as a way for Black Women and Girls around

the globe to affirm and support each other (Smith, 2016). CaShawn Thompson, (the woman

credited with creating the term), explained she used the word "magic" because the

accomplishments of Black Women were often perceived as "coming out of thin air;" with little

to no attention given to the multiple challenges we faced in the process (Thomas, 2015, para. 6).

Despite facing numerous obstacles in our roles as Multicultural Directors, the sistas had resisted

and persisted (at least for a year), but the motivation to stay at their institutions had not appeared

out of thin air. Emergent themes within this construct include: *Passion, Advocating, and Taking

Care of Ourselves*.

Theme 1: Passion

We often discussed how our passion for doing multicultural work stemmed from our own

personal experiences as Black Women. Autumn described how growing up in a small town

where she was one of very few Black people drove her passion for the work,

> I know what it feels like to be the only one; to not see yourself represented in various
>
> places. I was always in the principal's office asking, "Why are there no Black Women on
>
> the cheerleading squad? Why are there no Black people on homecoming court? I went
>
> from a K-12 system where I was one of very few Black students to a PWI where I still
>
> felt marginalized; like my voice and the voices of other Black people weren't being
>
> heard. That was the experience that informed me in my role as a Multicultural Director.
>
> Autumn went on to state, "I felt so much pride and gratification when I served in the role

because I knew that my work was directly impacting the success of students of color."

Alex explained where her passion stemmed from,

> I attended PWIs for both undergrad and graduate school and that was the first time my
>
> eyes were really opened to diversity. I remember meeting so many different types of
>
> people that I hadn't been exposed to growing up in my hometown. When I went on to
>
> work at a PWI [in a non-diversity related role], I started to learn more about social justice
>
> and I really began to see the inequities between the experiences of white students and the

experiences of students of color at the institution. During my time there, I was able to

transform policies that hurt underrepresented students. That's when I knew I wanted to

lead a multicultural office and do equity work full-time.

Alex went on to state, "When I was a Multicultural Director, I was able to speak the truth in

regard to students' experiences and my own."

Hazel credited her undergraduate experience with a student organization for stoking her

passion for multicultural work. Hazel shared,

Being bi-racial and growing up in all-white community, I never really understood

diversity. It wasn't until I started college and got involved in the Black Student Union

(BSU) that I began interacting with Black students who had very different experiences

than me growing up. That experience helped me understand the inequitable treatment

students of color faced. I carried that experience with me, and when I graduated and went

on to work at another PWI [in a non-diversity related role] I saw it as an opportunity to

help students who were like me. I became passionate about working with first generation

multicultural students. I loved being able to play a role in helping them to achieve their

goals.

Hazel's passion for working with and for multicultural students only grew stronger as the years

went on. In regarding her role as a Multicultural Director, Hazel stated,

I went to work every day because I knew there was stuff I wanted to do and I wanted to

support our students. I was continually striving to be the best at what I did and I wasn't

going to slow down, I was doing it for the students and I was doing it for myself.

Marie's passion for the work was born out of her experience working in the Multicultural Office

as an undergraduate at a PWI. She stated,

I came from a pretty diverse multicultural high school, so when I got to college and was one of only two Black Women on my floor, it was the first time being in a space where I didn't feel like I connected. When I found the Multicultural Center, I became really involved and worked in several different leadership positions over the course of the four years I was there. The Multicultural Director became a mentor. I was really inspired by his leadership and how he supported students and advocated for their needs.

In her role, Marie stated she would reflect on her undergrad experience whenever she started to question the purpose of her work. "I just go back to who I was as a young Black Woman from 18-22…what did I need?"

For me, the passion for multicultural work grew from working with multicultural students at my institution while serving in a different position.

As an academic advisor I would work with a lot of the students who frequented the Multicultural office and I realized how being connected to the office helped them to navigate the institution. Although they faced challenges, the multicultural office was always somewhere they could return to and feel seen. Meeting with historically marginalized students as an academic advisor caused me to reflect on my own experiences with racism and sexism as an undergrad. It was important for me to learn about the barriers underrepresented students faced and to help them brainstorm solutions and how to advocate for themselves. Hearing their stories made me think about the structural issues that were causing the challenges and how they could be addressed. Growing up, I was surrounded by people who encouraged me and removed all the barriers they could control so I could thrive. I knew from experience how important that kind of support could be; especially for people from historically marginalized

populations. When the Director position became available, I applied because I wanted to help change the institution so that I could support underrepresented students the way so many people had supported me.

Though we were passionate about the work, we were also aware of the various undertakings required to support underrepresented student populations at our institutions. We discussed how relationships with students and knowledge about their experiences on campus allowed us to share student concerns and advocate for their needs in leadership and committee meetings. Marie noted, "When I was in those meetings, I was serving as a bridge for students. I was there to help ensure equitable practices." Autumn added, I remember serving in various capacities all over campus for that exact reason, to make sure the representation was there."

Being in the Multicultural Director role also allowed us to bring speakers and guests to campus that reflected underrepresented students' identities and challenged the majoritarian narratives on campus and in history. Hazel noted, "bringing presenters was a great way to support students and impact campus in a way that encouraged deeper dialogue about the issues that were affecting them [the students]." Alex agreed,

> I was able to organize a week-long "privilege campaign" that focused on privilege and intersectionality. Privilege was rarely discussed on campus because there was this impression that privilege was inherently bad. Throughout the week we were able to bring in speakers, participate in dialogue, and have community members engage with an art display.

I discussed how I designed a workshop to help students and faculty navigate topics on race and identity in the classroom,

Every quarter faculty would ask someone from our office to come in and help mediate an issue that had occurred in class. Because so many of the classes addressed current sociopolitical topics, there was a lot of opportunity for issues around specifically race, gender, and sexuality to arise. In an attempt to proactively address these issues, our office developed a workshop that took place at the beginning of the quarter where we would discuss issues of power and privilege and provide students and faculty with tools they could use to navigate potentially challenging conversations.

Autumn noted the importance of the work we were doing, "Helping students navigate barriers in all the ways we did, it was heart work. It really meant something. I loved that I could directly see the benefits of the work I was doing." I agreed,

To be able aid in students' (and sometimes faculty and staff members) personal growth by presenting on various topics and doing workshops with them, and then having them come back and ask questions made me think, "maybe I planted a seed that's going to continue to grow and live beyond me." I felt like the work I was doing in that office was bigger than my office or even the institution. It was work that enriched people. I often wondered how when they left the institution and they were at work or out

in their communities; how they were going to change their little piece of the world with the insight they gained from something I shared with them. This role allows you to contribute to society in such a large way.

Thinking about lasting impressions prompted Hazel and I to discuss the changes that would live beyond us on campus. Hazel shared, "after consistently working with the president and the student government, I was able to secure the funds to remodel and double the Multicultural Center space." I recalled the creation of the Trans and Queer Center on campus.

It was a space students had been requesting for a long time and it was very much a

student run initiative. When a space near the multicultural center became available to be

repurposed, I worked with the students who were leading the initiative to get funding and

hire a coordinator. They decorated the space and really made it their own. I felt honored

to assist in making that happen and centering LGTBQIA students on our campus.

We knew our passion for the work had played a pivotal role in making things just a little

bit better for underrepresented students on our respective predominantly white campuses; but

what were we doing to support ourselves in these environments?

Theme 2: Advocating

We discussed several ways we used advocacy as a form of resistance when employed as

Multicultural Directors. Alex was the first to share,

> I just kept voicing whatever it was I needed; publicly, privately, in the meeting, and after
>
> the meeting. I made sure to not voice it only to my supervisor and his supervisor; but to
>
> everyone. I told everyone I knew because eventually, if enough people knew what I was
>
> asking for, maybe there'd be one or two who were in positions of power that could get
>
> me what I needed.

Autumn stated she advocated for herself by "being bold, being visible, and showing

up." I shared a story about how I advocated for myself when Evergreen was experiencing blow

back from the Day of Absence event,

> I remember being in a meeting with the president of the college, the Vice President of
>
> Student Affairs, the Vice President of Marketing, and my direct supervisor, the Associate
>
> Vice President of Student Academic Support Services. I was telling them everything that

was happening to me and my family and I was starting to get really worried. I remember asking them, What's the plan? What are you all going to do to support me, support the event, and support the college? The President and the VP of Marketing specifically, seemed to be less concerned about the death threats I was getting and more concerned about the offended faculty member and his freedom of speech. It took that moment for me to realize that any kind of meaningful public advocation for the event or for me was going to come from me. I ended up doing a few interviews and put some statements out on social media (with the help of family and friends).

Advocating for ourselves by speaking up constituted a form of resistance that further served to reinforce our marginal status within institutions (Jones et al., 2017). These moments often result in criticism of the Black Woman advocating for herself as opposed to the racist practices at the root of the issue (Jones et al., 2017). Reflecting on Alex and I's experiences caused me to recall something Alex said in her journal,

I've always been the person that empowers and encourages my Black Women friends and colleagues to learn how to love themselves and see the value in themselves first, because the institution may or may not see the value and they may lie to your face to make you think that they're going to value you. Um, and you can't control that, but you can control you.

Another way we advocated for ourselves was by cultivating strategic relationships. Marie called it "friendraising,"

I work to build relationships with people in a variety of offices who understand that addressing the needs of marginalized students is the entire campus' responsibility and welcome opportunities for equitable and just practices. Being able to build accomplices

throughout the institution and building that network of people who are also going to do some of that advocacy work on your behalf is imperative.

Marie described a second way she advocated for herself,

I try to put myself in different rooms. If I'm not invited, I'll reach out and ask how I can support. Later on, I might then ask about things I can get from them to help my students and my office.

Hazel had a similar strategy,

I was careful about picking and choosing my battles. I called it professional currency. I was able to collect that currency and invest in other partners across campus by supporting them in their work so that when I needed to, I could cash it in for favors and things that I needed. It was my own personal strategy for navigating the system.

For Autumn, helping students advocate for themselves was a form of personal resistance. Autumn explained,

Something that was empowering for me was helping my students strategize. Whenever the students would protest or storm the president's office, I was always behind the scenes helping them to get it together. That was a way of resisting for me. I was giving the students tips and pointers. As I got information, I would share it with my students so that they would be better prepared. Also, whenever they would go and meet with the president, I felt like it was my job to make sure they were prepared so that they were all in agreement with what they were arguing against and what they wanted from this meeting.

Marie supported Autumn's strategy,

I was always proud of students when they protested because I taught them how to do it. I got to be the supporting person to say "if you want to make this change, this is how you need to do it." I couldn't always be out there with them while they were doing it, but I knew it was going to change the culture or at least get people to start a conversation.

The sistas recognized the combination of emotional work and personal challenges as a recipe for burnout. Within the same sista circle, the conversation turned to how we took care of ourselves.

Theme 3: Taking Care of Ourselves

Similar to how we advocated for ourselves, we described various ways we practice self-care. A common practice for each of us was to seek support from others when necessary. Hazel and I were fortunate to have supportive direct supervisors who encouraged us to take time to care for ourselves when things got rough. The support from our supervisors helped immensely through their trust in us as professionals; and recognition of our lived experiences as Black Women as "enough." Unfortunately, this was not the case for all the sistas; however, we all had people we could call on to help us decompress and process events. Each of us could name colleagues, friends, and family members who provided the self-care that we all needed. Alex noted colleagues helped her stay sane,

> I became friends with a few of the Black Women on faculty, but my closest confidant was my colleague in the Women's/LGTBQ Center. After a tough interaction with my boss she would let me cry on her shoulder while we plotted ways to take over the department.

Alex went on to note,

It is really important to me to have quality relationships with Black Women. People just

don't understand. Black Women deal with so much. Every single thing that we do is

nitpicked; in our professional lives and in our personal lives. So, to be able to call up one

of my sister friends and just vent and for them to be able to understand, sometimes that's

all I need.

I also had a supportive group of friends and allies at work,

We supported each other over coffee or tea whenever necessary. I realize everyone

doesn't have that opportunity. There might not even be people at your job you want to

connect with like that. But when you are able to have that, it's priceless; especially in this

role.

Alex reminded us about the importance of believing in our own worth,

I don't believe the institution can change. I can control what I can control. And, so, the

person that I can control is myself. A Black Woman Multicultural Director has to have

authenticity in who she is both on the inside and the outside. So, if I can't show up

authentically, I'm not going to believe that the institution values me. It's just not going to

work if I don't believe in and see my own true value and worth.

In regard to her experience at the institution where she served as a Multicultural Director, Alex

said,

I had all the confidence in the world in my job there. I was not afraid to say, "this is what

I need." I did not worry about what the white people thought. I didn't worry about how I

showed up. I showed up. And no, I'm not there, but I'm not there because I fucked up. I'm

not there because of the horrible way I was treated at the institution.

Autumn agreed and added that Black Women who served as Multicultural Directors needed to have confidence in themselves. "During challenging times I had to remind myself, I know what I know; it gave me peace." Autumn also blocked time for meditation and prayer.

> Everybody gets two, fifteen-minute breaks a day and we don't really take those. I try to block out the first few minutes of my day, or maybe before a big meeting, and I just take a few minutes to prepare myself. To breathe and pray and just get my mind right so I can show up to the space as good as I can.

Another way the sistas took care of themselves was by creating boundaries. Alex commented,

> If you are going to be in relationship with me, whether personally or professionally, you are going to have to respect me. And you are going to have to do your own work around how you view and how you respect or disrespect Black Women.

Marie stated,

> I really believe in setting boundaries around my time. I don't do work on the weekends and late into the evening unless I'm attending an event. I also try to take time off. These are days I've earned. Why wouldn't I take them to get my peace back and to get reenergized to do this work? This job will replace me before my death certificate is signed. I'm not going to let them be the ones to kill me. It's not worth my wellbeing and my sanity and it shouldn't be part of what I'm giving of myself to this institution.

Eventually, all of us had set the ultimate boundary and left the position when we could no longer find a reason to stay. Marie remarked,

> I'm not about to stay at an institution for 20 years, just so I can say I've been there for 20 years. If it doesn't match my values and if it continues to produce harm and make it so that I'm constantly stressed out; I'm gone.

I shared how my experience at Evergreen ended in me leaving,

My evergreen experience was an interesting one because I was there for almost 10 years. And for most of that time, I didn't really have a lot of significant problems. I think that kind of led to a false sense of security. Because the whole time I was there, and especially in the Multicultural Director role, I felt like the majority of the community was behind me. And then when something actually happened where I needed them to be behind me, a lot of them fell off. There were definitely students, staff, and faculty members who showed me support, but there were people in upper administration; people who I always felt like I had good relationships with, that when the institution was receiving all of that blow back from Day of Absence, failed to stand up for me, for the program, or for the committee. I remember feeling really surprised at some people's reactions. I mean you really don't know who people are until shit the hits the fan. That's when you see who's really going to be an ally, who's really going to be there for you. It reminded me of the Maya Angelou quote, "When people show you who they are, believe them" (OWN, 2014). Well the administration at Evergreen showed me who they were, and I believed them. There was nothing else to do but leave.

Summary

This chapter described the experiences of five Black Women who serve(d) as Multicultural Directors at predominantly white institutions. Data was collected through use of pre-interviews, sista circles, journal entries, and post-interviews. An analysis of the data resulted in three theoretical constructs and ten emergent themes. The theoretical constructs and related themes were attached to one of three sub-research questions. The first sub-question focused on the everyday experience of the professional being personal and included one theoretical

construct: *The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Role* and four related themes: *The Climate We're Living In, Now You See Me -- Now You Don't, The Job is About You,* and *Fraught Relationships Mired in Oppressive Dynamics.* The next sub-question highlighted the challenges and advantages of being a Black Woman in the Multicultural Director role and resulted in one theoretical construct *To Be a Black Woman Multicultural Director* and three related themes: *Other Duties as Assigned, Do They Even Understand What We Do?,* and *Centering and Relating to Historically Marginalized Students.* Analysis regarding the final sub-question produced the theoretical construct *The Secrets Behind Black Girl Magic* and three themes: *Passion, Advocating,* and *Taking Care of Ourselves.* In the next chapter, I will contextualize these findings within the literature and draw connections to Black Feminist Thought. I will also discuss implications of the study and offer recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

Dear Black Woman Who Has Applied for a Multicultural Director Position at a PWI,

We see you sis. Out here shining. Out here giving PWIs all that magic. And now you've decided to become a Multicultural Director. You know these institutions weren't designed with us in mind, but you are still determined to make change. You realize the difficulties underrepresented students encounter because they are similar to what you encountered as an undergrad and what you likely have already encountered in your professional roles. You might have applied for this job because you want to make the experience for underrepresented students at PWIs better. And we want you to win. We've been there (one of us still is there). So, here's some advice based on our collective 16 years of experience as Multicultural Directors and a few tips we hope will help you along the way.

First and foremost, know that you are valuable and that your expertise is invaluable. There will be times when others force you to second guess yourself, but don't do it. Stand firm in what you know and what your lived experiences have been. Don't be afraid to use your voice. There are students depending on you. You are depending on you. Strive to be your authentic self at all times. We know it can be difficult to show up in all your Black Woman glory in spaces that don't fully acknowledge everything you bring, but making yourself small doesn't help anyone. When shit hits the fan, we can almost guarantee you the institution will fail you; the chances of an institution steeped in white supremacy doing what it was created to do are very high.

This role can be extremely fulfilling, you get to make a difference in people's lives. You get to support them, encourage them, and watch them grow. Regrettably, the work can also be exhausting. It's easy to let this work consume you. Determine your boundaries early and make them clear. Understand that when you are fighting battles for students, you are also fighting them for yourself. Remember to take care of yourself so that you can continue to support others. Black Women have saved this country time and time again. The expectations (overt and covert) for you to do the same will play out in a variety of ways. Make sure to connect with your support systems early, often, and as needed.

Navigating a PWI as a Black Woman Multicultural Director can be challenging. You've got to be politically savvy. Do your best to build accomplices throughout the institution. Figure out who your allies are. Unfortunately, not everyone who looks like you will be supportive, so be cautious. Create relationships and align yourself with the partners on campus that can enhance your work. Support and encourage others so that when you need assistance, they will support you. Don't agree to do things that go against your values; instead, learn all you can about the issue and propose alternate solutions that align with who you are. If necessary, push back.

Inevitably, people will come for you. As a Black Woman, you will be consistently challenged due to your race and gender. This is to be expected. You are doing life-changing work. You are centering the most marginalized and challenging white supremacy. Again, stand strong in your expertise. If they knew what you know and had what you have, they wouldn't have hired you. Do your best to cultivate an open and honest relationship with your supervisor so they can accurately articulate your decisions and initiatives to senior leadership. Be as purposeful, strategic, and transparent as possible so if required, you can explain why decisions were made. Meet in person when feasible; you'll be surprised at how some people's demeanors change when they are forced to communicate face to face.

You may find strength in connecting with other Black Women colleagues on campus. If this is an option for you, be intentional in your efforts to engage with them. Serve as collaborative partners when possible. Highlight a Black Woman colleagues' expertise in spaces where they are not present. Serve as a mentor when you can. We can support each other and we can make each other better- iron sharpens iron.

Finally, always remember your why. When times get hard, ask yourself why you took this job in the first place. What did you want to accomplish? Who did you want to help? How have you been able to affect change? The answers to these questions were often motivating and comforting to many of us when we faced difficult times; however, we also recognize that the "why" may not be enough. Burnout comes quick when you are not able to get meaningful work done. If you are understaffed, underfunded, and experiencing roadblocks at every turn, it may be time to make a change. We encourage you to treat this job like a romantic relationship- if it becomes toxic, leave. It's not worth your health and your mental well-being to stay.

We wish you all the best in this role sis. We know that you are capable of amazing things. The institution and the students would be lucky to have you. You are amazing as you are. Believe us when we say you are indispensable.

Sending Enormous Amounts of Love,
A Community of Black Women Multicultural Directors

P.S.- When negotiating your salary, go in knowing your worth and ask for what you want understanding that it still won't truly be enough to compensate you for all you will experience and all you will do.

Figure 3

Letter to Black Woman Applicant

I began this research study with a poem designed to ground the reader in the experience of being a Black Women Multicultural Director at a predominantly white institution. It is in that same vein that I use this letter (Figure 3), curated using the words acquired from sista circle transcripts, journal entries, and individual interviews, both to address Black Women who are considering the Multicultural Director role and to familiarize the reader with implications for practice and recommendations for future research revealed by the study's findings. The stories and experiences shared by Alex, Autumn, Hazel, Marie and I, provided insight into the lived experience of being a Multicultural Director at a PWI. Our stories made tangible the everyday experience of the professional being personal by emphasizing the interplay of race, gender, and role. In this final chapter, I contextualize the study's findings with a focus on our collective standpoint (outsider within status) and three key themes of Black Feminist Thought (BFT): Self-Definition/Self-Valuation, the Interlocking Nature of Oppression, and the Importance of Black Women's Culture. Finally, I discuss implications of the findings as well as limitations and recommendations for future research.

Connections to Black Feminist Thought

Living as the Outsider Within – Feeling Marginalized and Dehumanized

Each key theme of BFT is grounded in the foundational principle that Black Women, as a group, possess a unique standpoint that cannot be separated from the historical conditions that have shaped our lives (Collins, 1986). This standpoint places Black Women as "outsiders within" (Collins, 1986) - a status in which they live in the margins of white society in spaces where the intersections of their race, gender and class prevent them from gaining full membership into any one group. The "outsider within" status provided sistas in this study with an intersectional viewpoint that highlighted various instances of oppression in our roles as

Multicultural Directors. Examples of feeling like an "outsider within" include Hazel's disappointment when co-workers failed to check in on her after another Black person's murder led to national media coverage or when Autumn discussed how Black Women Multicultural Directors are often asked to use their pain as teaching tools. In both instances, it is the sistas' experience as marginalized outsiders that results in them being ignored and becoming hyper visible. For Hazel, her perspective as a Black Woman was being ignored; colleagues either failed to see or chose not to acknowledge how the deaths of Black people might be affecting their Black Woman co-worker. In Autumn's example, her lived reality as a Black Woman provided her with perspective and insights others lacked and identified her as someone who could help non-white community members grow in their understanding. However; it was done with complete disregard to Autumn's positionality.

The distinctive standpoint and insights of Black Women Multicultural Directors was also imperative when our institutions were dealing with instances of student unrest. Our expertise in those moments was situational, making us relevant for a moment, but not long enough for us for us to receive long lasting power or respect within the institution. Situational acknowledgement from institutional leaders only when they wanted students to "settle down" was demeaning because it implied that we were only useful in certain situations, when in fact, we were contributing in a variety of ways across campus that failed to garner the same recognition.

The experience of being an outsider within is expertly described by Zora Neal Hurston (2014) in her essay *How it Feels to be Colored Me,* in which she states, "I feel most colored when I am thrown against a sharp, white background" (paragraph 10). It was the pervasive racist and sexist underpinnings of white supremacy at PWIs that caused Marie and I to "feel" our identities when we were performing our job duties providing class presentations on issues of

racial inequity and holding space for non-Black students trying to make sense of their own experiences and perhaps unwittingly, engaging in anti-Blackness. While "outsiders" often struggle with being marginalized within the institution, it was clear that our critical perspectives were crucial as they provided the ability to see patterns that those immersed in the situation could not. Sistas used this advantage to their benefit by centering the voices and issues of historically marginalized students in their programming efforts, and sharing students voices at meetings with senior leadership.

Self-Definition and Self-Valuation

In describing the importance of self-definition and self-valuation, Collins (1986) noted the necessity for Black Women to define and value themselves because so much of how we are perceived is based on how white males have stereotypically defined us. Throughout the study, sistas described numerous instances in which they felt the need to defend themselves from stereotypical images that paint Black Women as aggressive, angry, complacent and incompetent by being "selectively authentic" and downplaying certain parts of our identities (i.e., motherhood). However, we learned that no amount of playing small would spare us from white supremacy. After a discussion in which Autumn and I discussed sacrificing authenticity and the realization that it hadn't actually helped in our situations she noted,

> What I have realized over the years is no matter how much I sugar coat it, no matter how much I box myself up and put a pretty little bow on it, I was never going to be received in the way I hoped I would. So why keep trying to fit into this little box they want me to fit into when whether I fit or not, you're still not going to listen to me? You're still going to push back against what I say. Making myself small isn't going to do my students any good and it doesn't do me any good.

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In sharing our stories, we were able to define the role for ourselves and rearticulate our experiences as Multicultural Directors in ways that provided context and accounted for the inequitable power dynamics Black Women are forced to contend with. Depictions of us as aggressive and angry were contextualized in our lived experiences serving as advocates who consistently went above and beyond to serve and meet the needs of students who believed they had no one else to turn to while we ourselves were often being professionally invalidated. In the process of sharing our experiences, we were able to re-define the role as one that far exceeded the stated description. If we were assertive or any other number of "unfeminine" qualities as Multicultural Directors, it was because it was an appropriate response to the racism and sexism we faced when doing our jobs. These "unfeminine" qualities aided us in surviving and transcending the harsh experiences that circumscribed our lived realities as Black Women Multicultural Directors. In other words, seemingly negative qualities when properly contextualized were actually accurate reactions to the oppression we faced when doing our jobs. Being bold in the ways we advocated for our students and for ourselves was essential. By defining and valuing qualities such as assertiveness and anger as appropriate and necessary, Black Women engage in self-valuation that "challenges the content of externally self-defined images" (Collins, 1986, p. S18). When accounting for the lived experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors, self-definition and self-valuation become necessary for our survival. This sentiment was aptly illustrated by acclaimed Black feminist poet Audre Lorde (1984) when she stated, "If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies of me and eaten alive" (p. 138).

Interlocking Nature of Oppression

A recognition of the interlocking or intersectional oppression Black Women contend with is pertinent for understanding the oppositional relationships the sistas described with Black male supervisors, white women deans, and white male faculty. Using an intersectional lens to view these dualistic relationships revealed a nuanced perspective on the ways in which the Black Women Multicultural Directors in this study were treated. Collins (1986) asserted dichotomous relationships were harmful for Black Women because they "imply relationships of superiority and inferiority" (p. S20). Collins (1986) went on to explain the oppression Black Women experience is shaped by a subordinate status that assigns them the inferior half in an array of dualities. The sistas shared a variety of ways in which these dualities influenced and impacted their experiences as Multicultural Directors. Both Alex and Marie described relationships with their Black male supervisors in which their gender situated them as inferior. Because both supervisors had served in the director role at their institutions prior to Alex and Marie being hired, the women often felt as if their supervisors believed they could (or had done), their jobs better than them. Patriarchal ideology (Collins, 2000) resulted in Marie's supervisor assigning her tasks based on perceived gender roles (i.e., situations he deemed more emotional in nature), dismissive of the fact that she had been adept at addressing a range of issues. Alex's supervisor's dismissiveness of even addressing basic needs (preparing a clean and functional office for her first day) showed not only a lack of respect, but an air of indifference, as if providing this basic service was not worthy of his time. Alex noted how his constant admonishments illuminated the lack of value he saw in her capabilities as a Black Woman. The dynamics of their relationship and his overall treatment of her as a professional were extremely damaging. Alex articulated how the relationship affected her,

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It harmed me because he's a Black dude and I expected more and I should have expected

more and I should have been cared for because we both exist as Black people in the

world, but that did not happen.

Alex and Marie's experiences brought to the forefront contemporary examples of how

(some) Black men have historically chosen to exclude or sideline Black Women based on the

patriarchal belief that their maleness made them more capable leaders than Black Women

(Cooper, 2017; Taylor, 2017). Alex's sentiment towards her supervisor were unfortunately not

new to the dynamic between Black Women and men. Forty-four years earlier, authors of the

Combahee River Collective Statement echoed Alex's position writing, "We struggle together

with Black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black men about sexism" (Taylor,

What We Believe, para. 3, 2017).

While Alex and Marie's stories involving the interlocking nature of oppression

highlighted experiences with Black men, inequitable power dynamics were also demonstrated in

Autumn's recounting of her experiences with white women who served as Deans at her

institution. Although they did not supervise her, their status as white women placed them on the

superior side of the dynamic due to their race. Because the Deans had unlimited access to the

budget and oversight of the students Autumn served before she was hired in the role, they saw

her as an obstacle. Their lack of acknowledgement and respect of her as a Black Woman in the

Multicultural Director role resulted in an incessant struggle on Autumn's behalf to maintain the

financial resources and access to student data needed to do her job. Further, because the Deans

also had a preestablished relationship with Autumn's supervisor at the time (a Black Woman),

Autumn was often encouraged to acquiesce to their requests. Ultimately, Autumn's experience

with being challenged by white women and occurrences of having to cede her professional

power were indicative of a long-held practice of prioritizing white women's needs over those of Black Women (Jones & Norwood, 2017).

My experience with a white male faculty member is exemplary of perhaps the most emblematic type of dualistic relationship that serves to harm Black Women as it placed me on the losing side of two dualities based on my race and gender. White men who participate in dualistic relationship dynamics do so with conscious or unconscious notions of white male superiority and accompanying notions of Black female inferiority (Jones & Norwood, 2017). The fact that a white man I had never met found it acceptable to disparage a Black Woman in a public forum over an event he found offensive demonstrates an obscene amount of disregard for Black Womanhood. That he ignored my equally public response and proceeded to go on national television to continue to misconstrue and vilify the event resulting in my receipt of death threats with no regard or concern for my safety, reenacts generations of abuse and violence directed towards Black Women by white men (Berry & Gross, 2020; Wilder, 2019). I believe my situation was further exacerbated by a "degree of racial anxiety and hostility based upon a perceived loss of social power" caused by a Black Woman and provoked by both the existence and centering of BIPOC at the Day of Absence/Day of Presence event (Jones & Norwood, 2017, p. 2054). In retrospect, the white, male faculty member's reaction and subsequent actions should not have been surprising, as it has been noted that when white, male dominance is challenged, backlash results (Jones & Norwood, 2017). My pushback to his assertions disrupted the comfort provided by his race and gender.

Autumn's and my experiences with white women and men illustrated how privileging the perspective, voice, and perceived knowledge of white people can negatively affect the experiences of Black Women in the Multicultural Director role (Gusa, 2009). As a whole, the

experiences Alex, Marie, Autumn and I shared demonstrated ways in which Black Women continue to be impacted by intersectional oppression in their roles as Multicultural Directors at PWIs and clarify how (some) individuals who hold dominant identities use dichotomous thinking as a refusal to see Black Women as professionals, regardless of the expertise they bring (Jones & Norwood, 2017). At the same time, in pushing back against our aggressors, we insured their behaviors did not go completely unchecked. Drawing attention to how the interlocking nature of oppression aids in subjugating Black Women provided an essential nuanced perspective that informs future practice.

The Importance of Black Women's Culture

Collins (1986) asserted Black Women's culture could help provide the symbols and values of self-definition and self-valuation that aided Black Women in seeing the circumstances that shaped their interlocking oppression. While these representations are often expressed by musicians, authors, etc. through artistic means, they can also be found in the sistas' relationships with students and the ways they practiced resistance in their roles. Autumn, Hazel, Marie, and I all discussed the experience of "othermothering"- a tradition in the Black community of Black Women caring for and supporting children regardless of their biological connection that dates back to slavery (Collins, 2000). For the women in this study, "othermothering" was exemplified through the familial relationships we formed with our students. These relationships were significant in that they provided reciprocal respite for both student and Director in a predominantly white space. This act of caring and being cared for by others symbolized a collective value of Black Women's culture.

Representations of Black Women's culture could also be found in the variety of methods the sistas had used to practice resistance within their roles; showcasing how Black

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Women's collective culture could be expressed through the lens of their varied experiences. Alex, Hazel and I shared how we were able to practice resistance through centering Blackness and other marginalized identities by bringing in presenters and facilitating events that challenged dominant narratives and celebrated our cultural value. Alex and I discussed how we had verbally and assertively advocated for ourselves with supervisors, colleagues, and senior leadership when our professional needs were not being met. Conversely, Autumn and Marie discussed how they viewed helping students strategize their institutional asks and protests as a form of resistance. Diverse in nature, these forms of resistance exemplify how Black Women Multicultural Directors are able to practice resistance in oppressive climates; thereby passing on essential tools to other Black Women Multicultural Directors who find themselves looking for ways to cope with simultaneity of oppression they might experience in the role.

Centering the sistas' lived experiences through the lens of Black Feminist Thought, illuminated practices that served to oppress us as well as those that showed our resilience. Next, I outline the implications of the study.

Implications of the Study

In this section, I discuss the four major implications that emerged through analysis of themes that constitute the theoretical constructs (or overall summations) associated with each of the three sub-questions (Figure 4). The first theoretical construct: The Intersection of Race, Gender, and Role revealed (1) Black Women Multicultural Directors experience a nuanced form of isolation in their roles. Themes from the second theoretical construct: To Be a Black Woman Multicultural Director, suggest that (2) Black Women Multicultural Directors who work at PWIs are doing work above and beyond their job descriptions in climates that continue to be

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oppressive. Additionally, the findings indicate many of (3) the women did not feel comfortable bringing their "authentic selves" to the workplace. Finally, the last construct: The Secrets Behind Black Girl Magic described a love Black Women Multicultural Directors felt for themselves that exceeded the love for the work. Although the sistas were passionate about their work and were diligent about advocating and caring for themselves, they were also (4) not afraid to leave their intuitions when departure was necessitated. Interwoven, I provide relevant literature to support each implication.
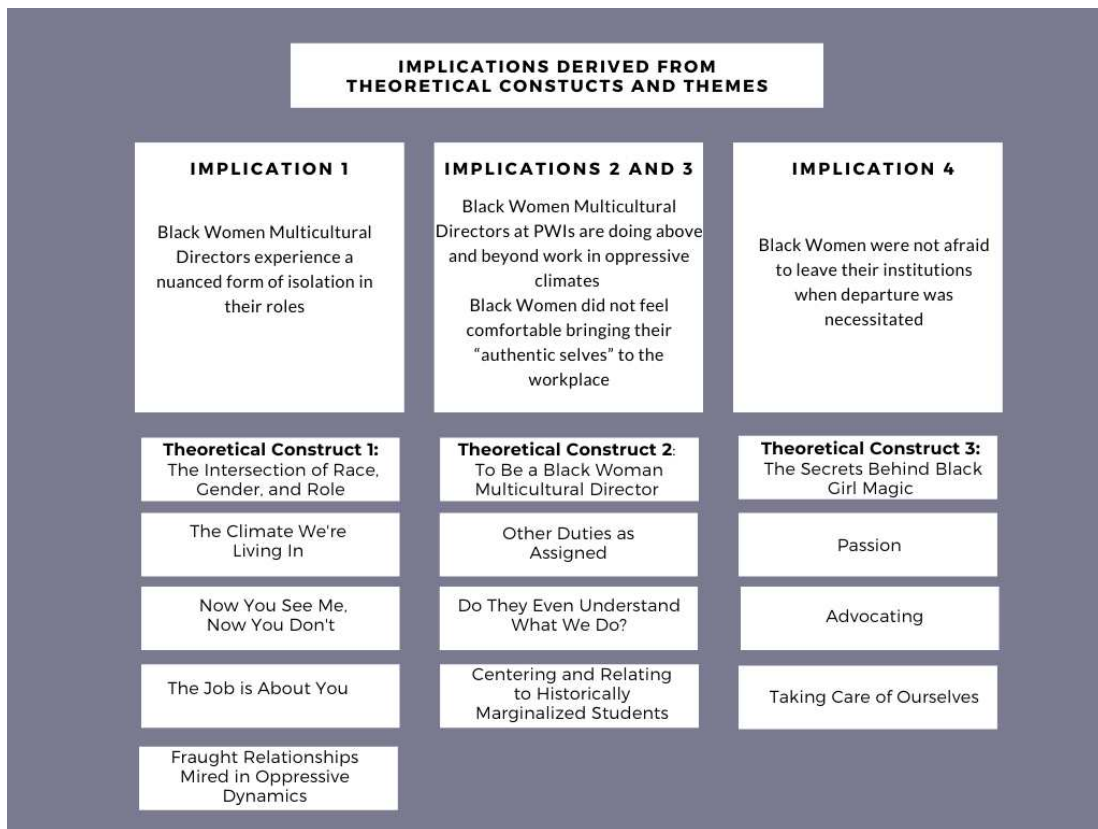

Figure 4

Implications Derived from Theoretical Constructs and Themes

Implication of Theoretical Construct #1- A Nuanced Form of Isolation

For the sistas who participated in this study, working in a role so intimately aligned with their identities created a nuanced form of isolation similar to that felt by women of color Chief Diversity Officers who felt as if their institutions left them out on their own to "navigate landmines," while also "activating allies" (Nixon, 2017, p. 309). Examples could be seen in Marie's story about having to call her Black students to warn them about going downtown, my experience presenting on white supremacy, Hazel and Autumn's experiences of feeling both ignored and hyper visible regarding campus response to the ongoing violence directed at innocent Black people, and Alex's supervisor's consistent dismissive behavior towards her. Each of these situations included a specific mix of psychological and physical isolation known only to those already accustomed to working and living on the margins as outsiders within predominantly white institutions. Similar experiences were shared by Black Women diversity workers in a study by Johnson (2021) in which they described how meeting the needs of the institution often coincided with detrimental effects to their well-being. Findings such as those discussed in Johnson's (2021) study support the assertion that connection among Black Women is critical to their success at PWIs (Johnson, 2019). Alex confirmed the importance of connection when she stated,

> It is really important to me to have quality relationships with Black Women. People just
> don't understand. Black Women deal with so much. Every single thing we do is
> nitpicked; in our professional lives and in our personal lives. So, to be able to call up one
> of my sista friends and just vent and for them to be able to understand, sometimes that's
> all I need.

Implications of Theoretical Construct #2- Going Above and Beyond in Oppressive Climates and Being Authentic

The most apparent implication of this study pointed to Black Women Multicultural Directors at PWIs doing work above and beyond their job descriptions in oppressive social and institutional climates. Predominantly white colleges and universities must consider why the women in this study felt so overwhelmingly "taxed" as well as how their climates enable the oppression the sistas faced. I believe the primary reason for this feeling of taxation lies in the fact that PWI's are as Nathan (2021) states, "working the way they were designed to work" (p. 111). This is especially true for Black Women Multicultural Directors who have taken on a role in an office born out of protest and residing in an institution that was not designed to accommodate and support them or the students they work with (Patton, 2005; Wilder, 2013). This realization is expertly acknowledged in a poem written by Nathan (2021) in her dissertation on the experiences of Black Women mid-level supervisors at PWIs,

nothing new.

it works the way it was designed to work.

institutions of higher education.

history of racism and sexism.

built, by slaves.

policies designed for white people, not designed with Black Women in mind.

it works the way it was designed to work.

hoodwinked, bamboozled, led astray, racism, really anti-blackness, exhausted, stuck. strong

Black Woman Stereotype- We will, We will, We will figure it out (p. 111).

Campus climate issues that impede Black Women Multicultural Directors full

participation and contribution at PWIs are representative of a long legacy of exclusion (Berry &

Gross, 2020; Brown & Dancy, 2010; Wilder, 2013). It is unacceptable that in 2021, Black

Women Multicultural Directors are still being forced to, as Nathan (2021) states, "figure it out."

Attempts to work within these constraints were exemplified when the sistas discussed having to

process racial violence for ourselves and the community simultaneously, the various creative

methods we had used to stretch our budgets, the challenges we faced regarding inequitable

relationships, and how we had counseled numerous students who felt they had no one else at the

institution to turn to. Researchers have noted the importance in which campus environment plays

in the success of Black Women and have asserted the degree of racism and sexism Black Women

experience is these climates is heavily dependent upon the attitudes and behaviors of the

administration (Becks-Moody, 2004; Johnson, 2019). If PWIs want to make the Multicultural

Director position sustainable for Black Women, they need to take intentional steps to both

support us in the role and transform the campus climate.

Being Authentic

Findings from the study indicate Black Women Multicultural Directors do not feel

welcome to show up authentically at work. Roberts, as cited by Smith et. al. (2019), described

authenticity as "a positive experience that involves being allowed to show all aspects of oneself

when one chooses to do so" (p. 1720). Being able to show up authentically is not only conducive

to Black Women's well-being, but important for the Multicultural Director position,

authenticism provides a way for Black Women to represent and draw upon the knowledge of

their communities (Smith et al., 2019). The decision to hide certain behaviors and pieces of our

lives at work was born out of an attempt to avoid preconceived notions our colleagues might

have held about Black Women. Unfortunately, many Black Women, (including the majority of those in this study), do not feel the same freedom to express their emotions or share intimate parts of their lives (i.e.-families) as their non-Black colleagues do without being judged (Krah, 2019).

Ahmed (2012) commented on the pressure people of color feel to refrain from asserting their cultures at PWIs as a means to be more acceptable. While Autumn, Hazel, and I expressed feeling we sacrificed some of our authenticity while serving in the role, we ultimately concluded that this sacrifice had not served us well. In fact, Hazel noted that eventually sharing her status as a single mother helped her connect to students. Alex, was the only sista who discussed the decision to show up authentically everyday noting, "I did not worry about what the white people thought. I didn't worry about how I showed up. I showed up." It should be noted however, that in Alex's' case, showing up authentically was more an element of personal resistance than wholehearted encouragement by the institution. In showing up authentically, Alex placed valuing herself above anyone else's perception of her, thereby redefining any number of preconceived stereotypical notions others might assume. Nathan (2021) noted that not being able to show up authentically equated to the erasure of Black Women and our contributions. Every Black Women Multicultural Director should feel resolute in their ability to show up authentically at work. In doing so, they serve to redefine images of Black Womanhood.

Implication of Theoretical Construct #3- Leaving When Departure was Necessary

Four out of the five sistas in the study engaged in what some might consider the ultimate form of resistance by leaving the Multicultural Director role when they got fed up with the lack of institutional support. Passionate about their charge to serve historically marginalized students, the sistas described strategies that involved designing events and bringing presenters that

centered marginalized identities, advocating for student needs in meetings with institutional

leaders and faculty, and serving as impromptu counselors, career coaches, and academic

advisors. We discussed feeling fulfilled by the work and honored to have been given the

opportunity to help students (and sometimes faculty and staff) grow in their understanding of

identity, culture, and inequitable social structures. However, while the need to help others was

compelling, it was not all encompassing. We did not hesitate to leave our positions when we got

fed up with a lack of institutional support. Alex, Autumn, Marie, and I all left predominantly

white institutions in large part due to the intersectional oppression we experienced in our roles as

Multicultural Directors. Marie summed it up nicely when she stated,

> I'm not about to stay at an institution for 20 years, just so I can say I've been there for 20
>
> years. If it doesn't match my values and if it continues to produce harm and make
>
> it so that I'm constantly stressed out; I'm gone.

The women in this study were not alone in this sentiment. Recent research from Barnard (2015),

Johnson (2021), and Nathan (2021) all described how experiences with intersectional oppression

had led Black Women staff, diversity workers, and mid-level student affairs professionals to

voluntarily terminate their employment at predominantly white institutions.

Recommendations for Institutional Practice

Grounded in the implications of the study and the words and experiences of the women in

this study, I offer three recommendations for institutional leaders and colleagues of Black

Women Multicultural Directors at PWIs.

1. Set Black Women Multicultural Directors up for success at PWIs by providing them

   adequate staff and budget and supporting their initiatives. Do the necessary research to

   understand the scope of their work and pay them accurately for the amount of work they

do. Help them to avoid feelings of isolation by offering and funding affinity groups for staff and faculty. Hire Black Women in various roles throughout the institution so they do not have to be "the only one." Be a vocal champion of their work. Show the Multicultural Director and the Multicultural Office consistent support as a means to center marginalized populations and educate the campus on the necessity of their presence and institutional role. Acknowledge that the institution does not operate in a vacuum and that Black Women Multicultural Directors experience intersectional oppression that impacts their experiences at work. Be strategic in how you position Black Women Multicultural Directors; allowing them the opportunity to impact a variety of campus decisions and provide campus leaders with insight that might not otherwise be gained. Be willing to communicate openly and hear their needs.

2. Be clear in your definition of the Multicultural Director role. Let potential Multicultural Directors know how you expect them to address issues of inequity on campus. Do not put social justice in your title or office charge unless you are truly prepared for the office to do social justice work. Be honest about what aspects of DEI you want the Director to focus on and what types of initiatives you are willing to support. If you do not have a Chief Diversity Officer or other senior diversity officer, consider how much work will then fall to the Multicultural Director and compensate them accordingly.

3. Acknowledge that DEI work is the work of the campus, not just the diversity-related offices. As such, all staff and faculty should be required to attend regular trainings to learn about the various forms and impacts of marginalization, intersectional oppression, emotional labor, and stereotyping provided by a (preferably) outside presenter. If PWIs do not take significant steps to change the climate, the institution will continue to "work

the way it was designed to work" (Nathan, 2021). If institutions are unable to bring in

outside presenters and want the Multicultural Director to fulfill this role, make sure it is

in their job description and compensate them for the work.

Limitations of the Study and Thoughts on Future Research

Zoom provided the opportunity to explore the experiences of five Black Women

Multicultural Directors from around the country who had worked at a variety of institutions

(large, small, public, private, 4 yr., 2yr). However, it is important to note because Black

Women's individual experiences with oppression are different (Collins, 1986), the findings may

not directly extend to persons beyond this study. Further, this study had a specific focus on the

experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at PWIs and does not account for how

those experiences might vary for Black Women Multicultural Directors at Minority Serving

Institutions (MSIs) or similar roles at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

Requirements for the study required potential sistas to have previously served or

currently serve as a Multicultural Director at a PWI for the duration of at least one year between

2015 and 2021. It just so happened that of the women who expressed interests, four out of the

five had previously served in the role, leaving only one sista who was still currently serving as a

Multicultural Director during the data collection process. Future research regarding Black

Women Multicultural Directors should focus on those who are actively engaged in the work. Of

particular interest is how the increasingly tense political climate and the culture of remote

working has affected the landscape of the position and the experiences of Black Women

Multicultural Directors.

Conclusion

This chapter opened with a letter expressing support and sharing advice for Black Women interested in pursuing the Multicultural Director role at PWIs. I then used key themes of Black Feminist Thought to illuminate the experience of being an outsider within and navigating intersectional oppression while working as Multicultural Directors at PWIs. This nuanced perspective allowed a rearticulation of experiences that serve to unapologetically acknowledge our truths and provide examples of daily intersectional oppression to those who may not readily recognize it. Next, I outlined four major implications of the study designed to help institutional leaders and colleagues interrogate their personal interactions and professional practices with the Black Women Multicultural Directors in their lives. Following the implications, I described limitations and tangible recommendations for practice. Finally, as referenced in the prologue, I offer this playlist:

https://open.spotify.com/playlist/35LagM9WgvI8SNRZU3coVB?si=e29ae3ddb4274ddb

made up of the songs used in this dissertation and those suggested by the sistas in this study, as a way to encourage the reader to literally listen as (mostly) Black Women artists express our feelings about the joys and challenges we face(d) in the role. It is my hope that listening to these songs will help bring our words to life and evoke emotions that encourage the reader to interrogate their personal interactions and professional practices with Black Women Multicultural Directors at their institutions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

Colorado State University
Knowledge to Go Places

DATE:	February 16, 2021
TO:	Carlson, Laurie
	Faircloth, Susan, School of Education, Love, Rashida, School of Education
FROM:	Chance, Claire, CSU IRB 2
PROTOCOL TITLE:	We Are Not the Same: The Experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at Predominantly White Institutions
FUNDING SOURCE	None
PROTOCOL NUMBER:	20-10507H
APPROVAL or DETERMINATION PERIOD:	February 05, 2021

NOTICE OF IRB REVIEW FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Thank you for submitting your application for expedited review to our Colorado State University Institutional Review Board (CSU IRB)(FWA0000647). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. As the nature of the research met the requirements for expedited review under provision Title 45 CFR 46. 110, Category 6, 7 of the federal Protection of Human Subjects Act, the IRB conducted a formal, but expedited, review of your application materials.

Based upon our review, your IRB application has been approved. The IRB approval begins today February 05, 2021, and expires on February 04, 2024.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for expedited review and may require a submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB. If contact with subjects will extend beyond February 04, 2024, a continuing review must be submitted at least one month prior to the expiration date of study approval to avoid a lapse in approval.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit. Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

IRB Office - (970) 491-1553; RICRO_IRB@mail.Colostate.edu
Claire Chance, Senior IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1381; Claire.Chance@Colostate.edu
Tammy Felton-Noyle, Senior IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1655; Tammy.Felton-Noyle@Colostate.edu

Chance, Claire

Initial review has been completed on 2/5/2021. Approval has been approved to recruit adults with the approved recruitment and consent procedures. Review was conducted under expedited review categories 6 & 7. Continuing review is not required in accordance with 45 CFR 46.109(f)(1)(i). The study was assessed as being in accordance with 45 CFR 46.111. This study is not funded.

Approved documents include:

Colorado State University

Knowledge to Go Places

- 20-10507H_Carlson_IRB Approved Consent_INITIAL_v.20210216.docx
- RL Confirmation of Participation Email
- RL Communication email to non-selected participants
- IRB Pre and Post Interviews
- Sista Circle Protocols
- Dissertation Methodology
- RL Demographic Questionaire
- Recruitment Flyer
- RL Recruitment Email

_____

None

Appendix B: Recruitment E-mail

Subject Line: Seeking participants for the We Are Not the Same: The Experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at Predominantly White Institutions research study.

Hello! My name is Rashida Love and I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership program at Colorado State University. With the guidance of my doctoral chair, Dr. Laurie Carlson, I am conducting my research dissertation study called: We Are Not the Same: The Experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at Predominantly White Institutions.

Due to the lack of research addressing the experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at predominantly white institutions, I developed this **critical qualitative study to allow Black Women the opportunity to define their experiences for themselves.** The **purpose** of this study is to investigate the lived experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at predominately white institutions through **discussing the advantages/ challenges of being a Black Woman Multicultural Director, learning how Black Women Multicultural Directors describe the experience of the professional being personal, and exploring how Black Women practice resistance in their roles as Multicultural Directors.** Because I value authenticity, truth, vulnerability, and compassion, I believe it is also important to let you know as the doctoral candidate conducting this research study, that I spent 5 years of my career in higher education working as a Multicultural Director at a predominantly white institution. **Through the entire research process, I hope you find this research study process empowering, transformational, and that you feel heard, valued, validated, and included.**

All interviews and sista circle group meetings will take place on the ZOOM platform and will be video and audio recorded. Sista circle group meetings consist of us coming together as a collective group to "gain an understanding of a specific issue, topic, or phenomena impacting Black Women from the perspective of Black Women themselves" (Johnson, 2015, p.45). Also described as a support group, sista circle group meetings are rooted in empowerment. As Johnson (2015) explained, "Empowerment is the process of stimulating Black Women to access their personal or collective power to strengthen one another" (p.41). **Below is an outline of the time commitment for selected participants in the research study**

- 1 mandatory pre-interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes.
- 3 mandatory sista circle meetings lasting a maximum of 3 hours each.
- 1 mandatory post interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes to take place after the final sista circle meeting.
- Keep an online journal consisting of responses to provided prompts, personal reflections from participating in Sista Circles and the topics discussed, or anything else you find relevant to share.
- Engage in reviewing transcripts and data for credibility and authenticity.

Participants selected must meet the following criteria:

- You must previously have served or currently serve as a Multicultural Director at a PWI for the duration of at least one year between 2015 and 2021

- You must have a minimum of five years working within student affairs
- You must identify as a Black Woman – This study defines Black Women as individuals from throughout the African diaspora currently living in the United States who identify as female biologically, socially, or culturally, regardless of sex at birth (Meyer, 2016).
- You must have access to a web camera in order to participate in data collection.

If you are interested in participating in this study and feel you meet the criteria, please contact Rashida Love at Rashida.love@colostate.edu. Upon receiving your interest, I will email you a google link to the Demographic Participant and Information Questionnaire Form for you to complete. For those that are selected to participate in the study, you will receive a confirmation email letting you know next steps. For those that are not selected, you will receive an email extending my appreciation for showing interest.

With everything going on in the world, I hope this call for participants makes you feel heard, seen, and valued. I am excited to conduct and engage in this necessary and significant research study and look forward to sharing the valuable experiences and knowledge of a group of people that consistently remain marginalized and devalued in research and higher education.

You matter.

Sincerely,

Rashida

Rashida Love, Doctoral Candidate, Colorado State University,

Appendix C: Demographic Form

The following information is being asked of you to determine if you meet the criteria to participate in this study. Participants selected for the study will need to be available between March 1st and April 15th for interviews and sista circle group meetings. A maximum of 6 participants including me will partake in this research study. Participants selected must meet the following criteria: previously served or currently serve as a Multicultural Director at a PWI for the duration of at least one year between 2015 and the present, have a minimum of five years working within student affairs, identify as a Black Woman (This study defines Black Women as individuals from throughout the African diaspora currently living in the United States who identify as female biologically, socially, or culturally, regardless of sex at birth (Meyer, 2016)), and have access to a web camera in order to participate in data collection.

I appreciate you taking the time to answer the following questions. All questions are required. As always if you have any questions, please contact me at Rashida.love@colostate.edu.

1. What is your preferred name?

2. What do you want your pseudonym to be? This name helps ensure your privacy is maintained throughout the study. This will be the name that identifies you as it relates to all aspects of the study.

3. What is your racial identity?

4. What is your gender identity?

5. What is your sexual orientation?

6. What is your ability status?

7. What is your socioeconomic status?

8. Are there other salient identities you would like to share?

9. Have you experienced racism and/or sexism in your role as a Multicultural Director?

10. There will be a pre-conversational interview that will last between 75-90 minutes and a post interview that will last approximately 75-90 minutes. Pre-interviews will be conducted between March 1 - March 7. Post interviews will be scheduled around the time of our last sista circle group. Are you willing to take part in both the pre and post interviews?

11. Three sista circle group meetings will occur once a week between March 8th – March 29th. Each sista circle group will last a maximum of 3 hours. Dates and times will be determined by the participants selected. Are you willing to take part in all three sista circle group meetings?

12. After each sista circle group meeting, you will be asked to engage in an online journal of reflection questions. This journal will serve as a way for you to share your thoughts related to the current sista circle as well as the upcoming sista circle. Are you willing to keep an online written journal?

13. Are you willing to engage in reviewing your personal transcripts and providing feedback and thoughts on themes and insights that arise through the data collection process?

14. Community norms will be instilled in every sista circle group meeting. To create an inclusive, empowering, honest, authentic, and understanding sista circle process, please share some community norms you feel would be helpful in making sure the process is inclusive, empowering, honest, authentic, and understanding.

15. Preferred cell phone number:

16. Preferred email:

17. What is your preferred way to be in communication within this study?

18. Do you have access to a webcam as the study will be conducted using Zoom?

19. Please upload a current version of your resume.

Thank you for taking the time fill out this survey. In the event you are selected to participate in this study, I will follow up with you through your preferred email. In the event, you have not been selected to participate in the study, you will receive an email letting you know.

Colorado State University
Consent to Participate in Research

We Are Not the Same: The Experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at Predominantly White Institutions

Introduction and Purpose
My name is Rashida Love. I am a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University working with my faculty advisor, Professor Laurie Carlson in the School of Education. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study which explores the experiences of Black Women Multicultural Directors at predominantly white institutions. This study will be using culturally relevant frameworks (Black Feminist Thought) and research methods (Sista Circle Methodology).

Black Feminist Thought (BFT) is a framework conceptualized by multiple generations of Black feminist in the United States and abroad as a way to acknowledge Black Women's comprised communal knowledge of intersecting oppression (Johnson, 2015). The framework is grounded in the belief that Black Women, as a group, possess a unique standpoint that cannot be separated from the historical conditions that have shaped their lives (Collins, 1986).

The goal of Sista Circle Methodology (SCM) is to "gain an understanding of a specific issue, topic, or phenomena impacting Black Women from the perspective of Black Women themselves" (Johnson, 2015, p. 45). There are three features that distinguish sista circles from traditional focus groups. First, because Sista Circles acknowledge the social and cultural relations of Black Women, the researcher is considered part of the group as opposed to a detached observer in a facilitative role (Hennink, 2014). Secondly, in combination with the focus group goal of gaining data (Glesne, 2016), Sista Circles are also designed to provide support and stimulate empowerment (Johnson, 2015). Finally, SCM invites Black Women to "come as they are" acknowledging a shared understanding of things left unsaid, varied use of language, facial expressions, and gestures as important ways of communicating that we use to make sense of ourselves and others. Combined, these three features represent ways of knowing that have been dismissed by dominant methodological practice, but that represent and augment significant ways of knowing for Black Women.

Procedures
If you agree to participate in my research, I will conduct pre and post interviews with you on the ZOOM platform at a time of your choice. The pre-interview will involve questions about your varied experiences as a Multicultural Director. It should last about 60-90 minutes. The post interview will involve questions about your experience in the sista circles and allow you to share any final thoughts about your experience as a Black Woman Multicultural Director. It should last about 60-90 minutes. The primary source of data collection will be three virtual sista circles scheduled for three hours each over the

course of three consecutive weeks. Meetings will be allotted a total of three hours but may end earlier if the topic has been sufficiently explored before the three-hour limit. Finally, I ask that you maintain an online journal through google docs to share with only me over the course of the study. Journal entries may include responses to provided prompts, personal reflections from participating in Sista Circles and the topics discussed, or anything else you find relevant to share. With your permission, I will record the interviews and sista circles. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide, and will be used for transcription purposes only.

Benefits
There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. However, I hope that by participating in this study you feel seen and are empowered by sharing and learning from other Black Women Multicultural Directors. Ideally, the information you and other participants share will ultimately be used by supervisors and colleagues of Black Women Multicultural Directors to interrogate their own interactions and professional practices with Black Women colleagues.

Risks/Discomforts
Some of the research questions may make you uncomfortable or upset. You are free to decline to answer any questions you don't wish to, or to stop the interview at any time. If you find yourself triggered by participation in any part of this research study and you experience mental distress you should reach out for support. Options for support include local community mental health centers, hospitals, or in case of immediate crisis, 911. As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, we are taking precautions to minimize this risk.

Confidentiality
Confidentiality cannot be assured in group settings; however, I can assure you that data collected will be handled as confidentially as possible. When this study is published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used. You will be asked to choose a pseudonym to be used in the study. Institution types (i.e.- four-year public/private, community college) and geographic locations (i.e.- east coast, Midwest, northwest) may be named in the study, however individual institutions will not. Additionally, some of the data gathered for this study will be analyzed in an aggregate form representing the collective voice of Black Women Multicultural Directors, further anonymizing participants.

To further minimize the risks to confidentiality, I will use the waiting room feature on ZOOM that allows me to control who can enter the meeting. Additionally, all ZOOM recordings, transcripts, data notes, and data analysis will be stored on a password protected drive. Journal entries will be shared via a google document that can only be seen by you and I.

Any information collected from participants as part of this research will not be used or distributed for future research studies.

Compensation
You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Rights
Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer any questions or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions
If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at ███████ ██ or Rashida.love@colostate.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at: 970-491-1553, or e-mail RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu .

****

CONSENT

Do you consent to the videotaping of interviews and sista circles?
___Yes
___No

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

_____
Participant's Name *(please print)*

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

If you agree to allow your pseudonym to be included in all final reports, publications, and/or presentations resulting from this research, please sign and date below.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date

Appendix E: Pre-Interview Questions

1. Please describe to me why you want to participate in this study.

2. Describe your path to becoming a Multicultural Director. What advantages do you feel being a Black Woman in the role gives you? What are the disadvantages?

3. What earlier experiences prepared you to be a Multicultural Director?

4. Do you (or did you) experience support in your role as a Multicultural Director?

5. Describe a typical day for you as a Multicultural Director.

6. How is this position different from other higher education /student affairs positions you have worked in? (for example: describe how you are treated, what are your interactions with colleagues/supervisors/faculty like? How do you feel when you go home? When you start your work day?)

7. How does the oppression you experience outside of work mirror what you experience in your role?

8. Tell me about the ways you have resisted within your role as a Multicultural Director.

9. As we prepare for the Sista Circles, what community norms do you want to see guide our time together during these circles?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share?

11. What days/times would work best for you for Sista Circles (Remember that they will be scheduled for a maximum of three hours)?

Appendix F: Post-Interview Questions

1. How would you describe your experience in the Sista Circles with other Black Women Multicultural Directors?

2. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience as a MD before our time ends?

3. Let's talk about your songs…
   a. Personal (any specific lyrics you want me to make sure I add)? -
   b. Vibe-

4. What questions do you have for me?