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Carrying the Weight : The Racialized Labor of Multicultural Center Directors of Color in Higher Education

Sherlene Iris Ayala

Carrying the Weight: The Racialized Labor of Multicultural Center Directors of Color in Higher Education

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by

Sherlene Iris Ayala

Montclair State University

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Dissertation Chair: Dr. Muninder Kaur Ahluwalia

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Carrying the Weight: The Racialized Labor of Multicultural Center Directors of Color in Higher Education

of

Sherlene Iris Ayala

Candidate for the Degree:

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program:
Counseling

Dissertation Committee:

_____
Dr. Muninder Kaur Ahluwalia
Dissertation Chair

Certified by:

_____
Dr. Kenneth Sumner
Associate Vice Provost for Research and
Acting Dean of The Graduate School

_____
Dr. Matthew Shurts

5/17/23
_____
Date

_____
Dr. Angela I. Sheely-Moore

_____
Dr. Milton Fuentes

Abstract

CARRYING THE WEIGHT: THE RACIALIZED LABOR OF MULTICULTURAL CENTER

DIRECTORS OF COLOR IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By: Sherlene Iris Ayala

Race-based cultural centers (e.g., Black Cultural Centers) were established on college campuses in the 1960s in response to the neglect experienced by Black students (Chessman & Wayt, 2016; Gorski, 2019; Gorski & Chen, 2015; Hurtado et al., 1998; Joseph & Hirshfield, 2011; Smith, 2008). During the multiculturalism movement of the 1980s, some institutions eliminated race-based cultural centers and established Minority Student Services (MSS) to support all historically marginalized students under a centralized center (Patton, 2011; Patton & Hannon, 2008). Since the establishment of these cultural centers, scholars reported that directors experienced institutional roadblocks (e.g., lack of funding) and resistance from faculty, staff, and students (Harris & Patton, 2017; Hypolite, 2022a; Jenkins, 2016; Marcy, 2004; Patton et al., 2019; Reid & Ebede, 2018; Stewart & Bridges, 2011). However, the presented scholarship continued to focus on single race-based cultural centers. Therefore, the goal of this dissertation study was to understand the lived experiences of multicultural center directors of color. A total of 16 multicultural centers directors completed interviews, and data were analyzed through Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Theory of Racial Tasks (TRT). Findings suggest that multicultural center directors of color are hired by institutions of higher education to carry out racial tasks. As a result, employee inequities in higher education remain. Implications for counselor education programs, senior administrators, and researchers are provided.

Keywords: multicultural center, multicultural center director, multicultural affairs, higher education administrators of color, theory of racial tasks, critical race theory, racialized labor

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation study to my "works of art" in human form; my two beautiful children E and J. You serve as my anchors in life. You continue to ground me and remind me of what is important in this world. There are places in my heart that I didn't know existed until I had the two of you. To be your mother is to truly live, and you have given me purpose in this world. My E&J; my anchor and fox. I love you to the moon and back. Thank you for being patient with me, and I hope when you get older, you will understand what this sacrifice meant to me and this family. To Brandon, for remaining as sane as possible while I retreated to kitchen tables, attics, basements, and Panera Bread. Thank you for bearing the load of parenthood at the tail end. I am excited to get our nights and weekends back.

To my *Wela*, the woman who raised me to be the woman I am today. I thank you for stepping in as a second mother and providing guidance and protection. Through all of your life struggles, you demonstrated resilience, which I've always admired. Life has never been easy for you, or for us, and yet you showed up every single day and conquered the world fearlessly. Thank you for being by my side.

To my family, *Diane, Lillian, Gita, Seth, Soleil, Sophia, Savannah, Anthony, Miahz, Sherry, Mike, Saniya, Mikayla,* and all of my cousins in Manhattan, upstate New York, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Florida, North Carolina, and Puerto Rico - We did it! And most importantly, I dedicate this dissertation to my mother who gave me life. You were my life, and for that, I give you this dissertation. And to my uncle who we lost too soon. Thank you for being my pen-pal. Thank you for letting me tell you my graduate stories. Thank you for walking me down the aisle. Thank you for holding on to see me through to the end. As I whispered in your ear at the hospital, "I did it."

Mom (1965 - 1993) and Pito (1967 - 2023)

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"This campus was on the verge of violence last night, and I had to force the administration to make a decision. I feel remarkably alone, but I will carry this mantle for as long as I have to."

Kyla Relaford (1980-2018)
(Personal communication, February 2018)

I begin this dissertation with a text message from my mentor Mrs. Kyla Relaford. Relaford was a bi-racial woman who, at the time of this conversation, served as the director of the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Plattsburgh, a predominately white institution (PWI). EOP is a state funded program that provides access to students whose life consists of historical economic and cultural disadvantages. As the director of the center, Relaford counseled students, who primarily were Students of Color, on matters such as academic success and financial literacy.

Relaford and I were discussing the troubling incident that occurred at my alma mater, SUNY Plattsburgh. In January of 2018, a White female student posted a photo on social media with a disturbing caption referencing the lynching of Black men and women (Clermont, 2018; Elizabeth, 2018). The photo spread among the student body, and outraged students protested demanding that the student be suspended from the university. As one of two senior administrators of color at SUNY Plattsburgh, students sought out Relaford for her help, guidance, and comfort. In the days to follow, their momentum and anger intensified, and she saw it as her duty to advocate for the Students of Color during the campus turmoil. Her advocacy included meeting with students individually day and night, as well as attending students' protests. In addition to supporting students, Relaford met with university officials including the college President, Provost, and Dean of Students. She requested that they respond to student demands (e.g., creating a multicultural center and requiring diversity training for all faculty and

staff) before violence erupted. As a bi-racial women, Relaford understood the impact of racism in higher education; therefore, she felt compelled to support her students through the turmoil. Unfortunately, Relaford died six weeks into the campus uproar. Relaford's students continued their momentum in her name.

Relaford's dedication aligns with Maslach and Gomes (2006) scholarship that highlights that People of Color often go above and beyond to protect and serve historically marginalized communities. However, self-sacrifice has consequences, and scholarship that explores the experiences of higher education administrators of color who work with historically marginalized college students is scarce. In particular, what is missing is the voices of mid-level administrators of color who are hired by an institution to support Students of Color. Therefore, the purpose of this dissertation study was to understand the lived experiences of multicultural center directors of color in higher education. In this chapter, I will provide a brief overview of the problem, present the research question, discuss the rationale for conducting this study, and introduce the theoretical frameworks guiding this dissertation. Additionally, I will introduce the proposed methodology and conclude with the definitions of the key terms that will be used throughout the study. In the section to follow, I begin with providing an overview of the problem statement.

Statement of the Problem

In 2014, after the highly publicized tragic killings of Black and Brown men and women such as Michael Brown, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, and Sandra Bland (Rhoads, 2016), the United States (U.S.) saw an increase of racially driven movements sweep the nation. Tension between the police and racial and ethnic minority communities consistently appeared on television screens and social media feeds. Consequently, student activism movements erupted onto college campuses, and similar to the Civil Right Era, college students staged protests to

voice their concerns with institutional racism (Arellano & Vue, 2019). One of the most intense displays of student resistance took place in 2015 at the University of Missouri. Student Government President, Payton Head, shared on social media that he was called the "n" word while walking across campus (Pearson, 2015). Two weeks later, protests erupted at the university. Football players refused to play, graduate students refused to eat, and ultimately the university president resigned.

In the months to follow, higher education saw an increase of student demonstrations on college campuses. Espinosa et al., (2016) collected and presented data that captured the state of race relations on college campuses. In January of 2016, Espinosa and colleagues surveyed college and university presidents to understand their actions surrounding campus racial climate. Of the 567 presidents who responded to the survey, 50% from four-year institutions and 13% from two-year institutions reported that racial unrest erupted on their campuses. Furthermore, only half of the presidents at four-year institutions reported that they had a staff member dedicated to diversity and inclusion. Many presidents admitted that they did not have a diversity officer. As a result of the negative campus climates, presidents were forced to make decisions. Presidents reported that they invested in initiatives such as 1) hiring more faculty and staff of color, 2) designing cultural competence training, 3) investing in diversity initiatives outside of the classroom, and 4) establishing or enhancing a student multicultural center.

Multicultural centers are not new to higher education. When Black students arrived to PWIs during the 1960s Civil Rights Era, they reported feelings of isolation, racism, microaggressions, and lack of support (Hefner, 2002; Patton, 2005; Patton, 2010; Stovall, 2005; Watson et al., 2002; Yosso & Lopez, 2010). Similarly, to the presidents in the survey mentioned above, during the Civil Rights Era, senior leaders were forced to create spaces for Black

students. The first cultural centers in higher education were housed in Africana and Black studies departments and were staffed by Black faculty members. These centers were called Black Culture Centers (BCCs) and they emerged as places for social and political protest (Hefner, 2002), cultural programming (Pittman, 1994), refuge (Patton, 2010), and educational support (Young & Hannon, 2002). However, in the 1980s and during the multiculturalism movement, some senior leaders dismantled BCCs and created all-encompassing multicultural centers, known as MSS. MSSs were expected to implement strategies that addressed the needs of all historically marginalized students under an umbrella unit (e.g., race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, national origin, etc.).

Many scholars grew concerned about the erasure of BCCs and the establishment of MSSs (Princes, 1994). In particular, scholars argued that MSSs were established by White senior leaders as a way to minimize the attention on systemic racism and White privilege. However, despite these concerns, senior leaders continued to establish MSSs, now known as Multicultural Centers. Some scholars have paid attention to the operations of multicultural centers. For example, Gorski (2019) indicated that cultural centers are invalidated by faculty, staff, and students. Additionally, scholars argued that diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives, which often includes multicultural centers, are perceived by senior leaders as having minimal impact on university strategic goals (Jenkins, 2016; Patton et al., 2019). Multicultural centers are often staffed by one or two administrators, a part-time staff member, and/or a part-time graduate student (Renn, 2011). These centers often lack adequate visibility (e.g., located in the outskirts of campus), and lack financial resources. These centers are also the first to experience budget cuts during tough financial times (Bankole, 2005; Harris & Patton, 2017; Jenkins, 2016; Princes, 1994).

In addition to multicultural centers being minimized, not surprisingly, these spaces are also often directed and managed by the most marginalized and at risk in organizations, People of Color. Researchers argued that organizations rely on historically marginalized administrators to ease race relations, serve as a buffer between Whites and People of Color, as well as take on the burden of addressing equity as a way to alleviate White senior leaders (Lerma et al., 2020; Owen, 2009; Padilla, 1994; Patton et al., 2019; Reid & Ebede, 2018; Wingfield & Alston, 2014; Wooten & Couloute, 2017). While it may be argued that People of Color are drawn to these positions, Gorski and Chen (2015) argued that hiring People of Color to serve in these types of roles has negative consequences. Administrators of Color who fight racism daily may be susceptible to burnout from the emotional labor (Gorski, 2019; Gorski & Chen, 2015), as well as experiences with racial battle fatigue (RBF). Smith (2008) defined RBF as, "the physiological, psychological, and behavioral strain exacted and racially marginalized and stigmatized groups and the amount of energy they expend coping with and fighting against racism" (Smith, 2008, p. 616). Within the context of higher education, People of Color often navigate institutional cultures embedded with cultural norms that perpetuate whiteness. As a result, People of Color have to navigate campuses differently than Whites, and oftentimes, People of Color are subjected to racial burden and trauma. As Smith (2008) noted, People of Color experience extreme environmental stress.

Literature on the experiences of multicultural center directors of color is fragmented. That is, literature exists on race based cultural centers (e.g., BCCs), senior diversity officers in higher education (e.g., chief diversity officers), and Administrators of Color in higher education (e.g., university presidents). However, to date, there is very little research that explores the work

experiences of multicultural center directors of color, thus this dissertation study aimed to fill in the gaps.

Research Question

Therefore, the guiding question for this dissertation study is: What are the lived experiences of multicultural center directors of color in higher education?

Significance of the Study

Since the establishment of BCCs in the 1960s, the existing body of literature has focused on the historical evolution of BCCs (Patton, 2010), the relevance and future of BCCs (Hefner, 2002), and the benefits to students at PWIs (Pittman, 1994). However, there is a dearth of literature that explored the experiences of the Administrators of Color who direct all-encompassing multicultural centers. Lori Patton, the leading scholar on multicultural centers in higher education, argued that if we do not conduct research on multicultural centers, it ultimately allows senior leaders to make decisions based on assumptions, values, and beliefs (Patton, 2010). Furthermore, the brief literature previously presented suggested that BCC administrators are operating with minimal resources and institutional support (Harris & Patton, 2017; Moses, 1993). University leaders cannot be complacent and institutional change cannot be enacted by a sole entity; therefore, university leaders must act on their commitment to improve campus racial climates (Griffin et al., 2012). If higher education continues to place unrealistic workloads on multicultural administrators who are understaffed and overworked, it has negative implications for the employee (e.g., career, health, and wellness), as well as the systemic organization within higher education. That is, higher education policies and procedures will continue to maintain White Eurocentric values that are harmful for historically marginalized groups in higher education. Therefore, the results from this dissertation study can highlight the challenges these

administrators face, as well as communicate the consequences if higher education continues to overtax multicultural center staff. If the administrator's health and wellness deteriorate, it may halt the institution's progress toward achieving racial equity (Gorski, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

To examine the experiences of multicultural center Administrators of Color who work in higher education, I purposefully chose two theoretical frameworks that acknowledge racial inequalities in higher education systems. The two theories are Critical Race Theory (CRT) and Theory of Racial Tasks (TRT). The scholars of these two theories argued that organizational structures reproduce racial hierarchies whereby Whites and People of Color are assigned different tasks within organizations (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Wingfield & Alston, 2014). Furthermore, these scholars suggested that White norms pervade organizational spaces and that the voices of People of Color are often presented from the deficit narrative (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Wingfield & Alston, 2014). Therefore, I chose these two theories to legitimize the voices of People of Color in higher education, as well as highlight the organizational processes that negatively impact People of Color. In the section to follow, I provide a brief overview of the two theories. An extensive overview of each framework is provided in Chapter 2.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

CRT originated when progressive legal activists and Scholars of Color challenged the outcomes of discriminatory litigation cases that, on the surface, seemed to have nothing to do with race. These legal activists suggested that racism is invisibly ingrained in all political and legal structures; thus, decisions made in these contexts systematically negatively impact People of Color (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). In the 1990s, educational researchers began to apply CRT to their scholarship as a method to explore how racism is embedded in institutional structures.

There are many CRT approaches, and for the purpose of this dissertation, I used Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) CRT framework. Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) five tenets of CRT are as follows: (a) the centrality of race and other forms of oppression, (b) the challenge to the dominant ideology, and deficit perspectives, (c) a commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential knowledge, and (e) a transdisciplinary perspective. CRT was appropriate for this dissertation study because it placed systemic racism in the center of data collection and analysis (Museus et al., 2015). That is, CRT illuminates how racism permeates higher education policies and practices at the expense of People of Color. Furthermore, CRT emphasizes the use of storytelling and counter storying; thus, participants were able to share their stories and counter the deficit narrative (Museus et al., 2015; Parker, 2003; Parker & Stovall, 2004; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Theory of Racial Tasks (TRT)

The second theoretical framework used for this study was TRT. TRT scholars pay attention to the invisible racialized labor invested by People of Color who address systemic racism (Wingfield & Alston, 2014). In particular, TRT scholars are interested in highlighting the ways in which organizations hire People of Color to ease racial tension. By doing so, organizations intentionally create positions such as multicultural center directors, and these positions serve as an invisible barrier between Whites and People of Color. This racialized labor is what TRT scholars define as racial tasks. Racial tasks can occur at three distinct levels within an organization: (a) physical level (e.g., the location of People of Color), (b) interactional level (e.g., daily routines that keep Whites comfortable), and (c) ideological level (e.g., funding) (Wingfield & Alston, 2014). TRT was useful to address the research question because it concretized the ways in which multicultural center directors are hired to carry out racial tasks for

institutions of higher education. Furthermore, the TRT framework highlighted how day-to-day interactions between Whites and marginalized employees reinforced racial hierarchies at a detriment to People of Color (e.g., not being considered important enough to attend meetings with senior leaders). Utilizing both theories together allowed me to bring forth data that reinforced that racism is systematic rather than individual (e.g., one bad apple within an organization) (Ahmed, 2012).

Methodology

Qualitative research is used by scholars who are interested in understanding how participants interpret and make meaning of their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Data is collected primarily through interviews, observations, and focus groups (Creswell & Poth, 2018). At the conclusion of data analysis, the researcher is able to provide rich and thick detailed interpretations of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data is submitted via a narrative analysis.

There are several approaches to qualitative research. For the purpose of this dissertation, I used phenomenological research methods. Peoples (2021) defined phenomenology as, "the essence of something is described in terms of how it functions in the lived experience and how it shows itself in consciousness as an object of reflection" (p. 29). In other words, phenomenological researchers place human experiences in the lived world, specifically, how humans understand their experiences within a larger context (Wertz, 2005). The goal is to understand the participant's experiences from their perspectives and understand what meanings are ascribed to the shared phenomenon (Hays & Singh, 2012; Hays & Wood, 2011). There are two main theoretical frameworks of phenomenological research methods. I used Martin

Heidegger's framework for this phenomenological study. My rationale and in-depth review of this approach is explained in further detail in Chapter 3.

Once the study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I recruited participants via social media networks. A total of 16 multicultural center directors completed the study. Data collection occurred via Zoom. Data analysis included identifying common themes, clustering meanings, and engaging in descriptive coding from the participants (Merriam, 2009; Peoples, 2021; Wertz, 2005). Participants answered questions that focused on capturing the essence of their work environments, relationships with colleagues, and the realities of their role. Field and reflective notes were taken as a method to contribute to the rich in-depth description that is used by phenomenological researchers (Creswell & Poth, 2018). For reliability and validity, I engaged in journaling, consulting with critical friends, and providing participants with an analysis of my data, also known as member checking.

Researcher Stance

Researchers must be aware and cognizant of their multiple identities, positions of power and privilege, world views, political values, as well as biases (Hall & Callery, 2001; McLeod, 2015; O'Sullivan, 2015; Suzuki et al., 2007). To do so, researchers must engage acts of reflexivity such as journaling, utilizing critical friends, and inviting participants to provide feedback. Therefore, it is important that I discuss my relationship to this dissertation study. I identify as a Latina woman, first-generation college student who attended a PWI. As one of the few Students of Color at the college, I experienced isolation and homesickness. I considered leaving the institution; however, I joined a Latina-oriented sorority, and my network expanded. I fostered connections with administrators on campus and as a result built the courage to advocate for the needs of Students of Color. I spent the majority of my undergraduate career serving as a

social justice advocate raising awareness about the negative experiences Students of Color face at PWIs. After my undergraduate studies were complete, I went on to pursue a master's degree, and soon after graduation, I assumed several roles working in multicultural centers. I spent 11 years working in multicultural affairs. However, as time passed, I became frustrated with the lack of institutional commitment for diversity and equity, and in 2017, I switched careers and joined academic affairs. Therefore, as the researcher of this study, I entered this study with assumptions. Thus, the use of critical friends and member checking allowed me to constantly engage in reflective activities throughout data collection and analysis.

Definition of Terms

Throughout the remainder of this dissertation study, I use certain terminology that may vary from reader to reader. Furthermore, each institution of higher education uses terms differently to capture similar functions. Therefore, it is important for me to define how I use these terms throughout my writing. The terms are presented below in alphabetical order.

Campus Racial Climate

Campus racial climate is defined as having five dimensions including (a) the historical legacy of inclusion/exclusion of People of Color, (b) organizational structure relates to policies and procedures, (c) compositional diversity, (d) behavioral and social interactions, and (e) perceptions of racial discrimination (Hurtado et al., 1999; Milem et al., 2005).

Institutional Racism

Sue (2003) defined institutional racism as practices and policies that are oppressive and deny opportunities to racial and ethnic minorities. These policies and practices can be indirect or direct and negatively impact the experiences of People of Color in higher education. This term will be used interchangeably with systemic racism.

Multicultural Center

The purpose of a multicultural center on a college campus is to provide psychological and social support to all underrepresented students across various marginalized identities (e.g., race, class, gender identity, religion) (Patton, 2010). These centers vary in names on college campuses across the United States (e.g., diversity center, minority student services), however for the purpose of this dissertation this space will be referred to as the multicultural center.

Multicultural Center Directors

A multicultural centers director is the person who is managerial administrator of the space. They often work Monday through Friday 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., as well as late nights and weekends to attend student events. This person often has a master's degree and is knowledgeable about college student development theory, student racial identity theory, as well as the experiences of underrepresented students. The director is often a mid-level manager role who reports to a dean or vice president within a student affairs unit. It should be noted that some of the participants of this study served as the director of their multicultural center as well as a dean for a student affairs department. Therefore, for the purpose of this dissertation, all participants will be referred to as directors.

People of Color

Sue (2003) defined race as the "biological classification system determined by physical characteristics of genetic origin" (p. 34). For the purposes of this dissertation, I am choosing to define People of Color as racial and ethnic minorities in the United States who self-identify as Black or African American, Latino/a/x, Asian American, American Indian or Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian, Other Pacific Islander or bi-racial.

Racial Battle Fatigue

Racial Battle Fatigue (RBF) is "the physiological, psychological, and behavioral strain exacted and racially marginalized and stigmatized groups and the amount of energy they expend coping with and fighting against racism" (Smith, 2008, p. 616).

Racism

Sue (2003) defined racism as, "any attitude, action or institutional structure or any social policy that subordinates' persons or groups because of their color" (p. 31). For the purpose of this dissertation, racism will be used to describe the systemic use of power by White people to oppress People of Color.

Student Affairs Administrator

The emergence of the student affairs administrator can be traced back to the 1600s when tutors lived with young men in the residence halls and were expected to monitor students closely (Noël-Elkins, 2017). Ardoin (2014) defined student affairs as the administrative unit of an institution contributing to the growth of a student alongside academic affairs. This includes advising or management. Therefore, the term student affairs administrator will be used to describe someone who is responsible for college student development outside of the classroom, does not have a tenure-track faculty role, and is not expected to produce research for the university.

<div align="center">

Organization of the Dissertation

</div>

This dissertation study is organized and presented in five chapters. In this chapter, I briefly presented the introduction, problem statement, the research question, the significance of the study, the theoretical frameworks, the methodology, my researcher stance, and the definition of terms. In Chapter 2, I provide an in-depth review of the theoretical frameworks and literature.

In Chapter 3, the methodology used to guide the dissertation is presented. The research findings are presented in Chapter 4, and lastly, in Chapter 5, I present my analysis of the data along with research strengths, limitations, and implications for counselor education, higher education, and future research.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Race-related student activism and protests continue to sweep through institutions of higher education. For example, in March of 2022, Ohio University students protested after racial slurs were written on the walls of a residence hall (Carrasco, 2022). Also in March of 2022, multicultural student organizations rallied for the impeachment of the student body president at the University of Texas at Arlington after she posted racist remarks on social media (Ramirez, 2022). Students at the University of Buffalo protested in the student union in April of 2022 and chanted "Black Lives Matter" after conservative politician Allen West delivered a talk on campus titled, "America is not racist" (Ashley, 2022). These student demonstrations are not new to academia; however, the discourse on the neglect of Students of Color has gained momentum (Chessman & Wayt, 2016). As a result of student protests, university leaders often respond by enhancing resources that improve campus racial climate, such as the enhancement or development of a student center (e.g., a multicultural center) that focuses on improving the experiences of Students of Color (Karkouti, 2015). However, the brief overview of the literature I presented in Chapter 1 suggests that diversity initiatives such as multicultural centers often lack institutional support such as funding, staffing, resources, and the agency to make systemic changes to improve campus climate (Patton, 2011). As such, directors of these departments experienced challenges executing their goals which, in turn, impacted racial and ethnic marginalized students (Gorski, 2019; Gorski & Chen, 2015; Hurtado et al.,1998; Joseph & Hirshfield, 2011; Smith, 2008). Further, multicultural centers are often staffed by People of Color. Researchers found that People of Color who work in higher education are subjected to isolation, tokenism, and burnout as they respond to negative campus climates (Gomez et al.,

2015; Luedke, 2017; Steele, 2018). In the remainder of this chapter, I present the theoretical frameworks guiding this study followed by the review of the literature.

<div align="center">**Theoretical Frameworks**</div>

A theoretical framework provides researchers a lens to explore a phenomenon and key components of the study, including the rationale, the problem statement, the research question, and how researchers analyze data (Grant & Osanloo, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Both Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the Theory of Racial Tasks (TRT) were used for this dissertation study. An overview of both theories is presented in the section to follow.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

The Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement was launched in 1977 by White scholars at the inaugural CLS Conference in Madison, Wisconsin (Stewart, 2020). Attendees of the conference believed that legal reasoning was biased and influenced by social and economic factors. The attendees argued that economic structural arrangements such as housing, job opportunities, and access to education differed for various groups of people. Those in positions of power maintained legislation and the rules of the law that favored the dominant culture; thus, legal rulings were impacted by class (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Brown & Jackson, 2013; Treviño et al., 2008; Yosso, 2005). A criticism of the CLS viewpoint, however, was that it did not include the racism and inequality experienced by People of Color; thus, race activists and scholars, including civil rights attorney Derrick Bell, established Critical Race Theory (CRT) to address these concerns in the legal system (Jackson, 2018). CRT allowed scholars to direct their research to the White Eurocentric structural arrangements that negatively impacted and further discriminated against People of Color. CRT scholars used CRT to explain how racism continued to function in society to the detriment of People of Color. Further, researchers who used CRT

shifted the deficit narrative away from People of Color and instead highlighted the structural

inequities in the legal system that disadvantage racial and ethnic minorities (Brayboy, 2005;

Johnson-Ahorlu, 2017; Lynn & Adams, 2002; Lynn et al., 2002; Treviño et al., 2008; Yosso,

2005). Today, CRT is used by education scholars to examine the injustices occurring at

institutions of higher education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

CRT was a valuable framework for this dissertation study because the theory provided a

lens and argument for how racism impacts People of Color's lived experiences at institutions of

higher education (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2017). Scholars who utilize CRT within educational settings

use it to explain what racism is, how it functions within organizational systems, how it continues

to privilege Whites, and how it impacts the emotional and psychological well-being of those who

are impacted by racism in educational settings (Culp et al., 2011; Pérez Huber, 2010). Thus,

since this study will explore the experiences of administrators of color who oversee multicultural

centers, CRT assists in addressing the proposed research question. There are many variations of

CRT. I chose a CRT framework that is rooted within educational settings. That is the work of

Solórzano and Yosso (2002). Next, I explore the five tenets as defined by these scholars.

CRT Tenets

The five tenets of Solórzano and Yosso's (2002) CRT framework are as follows: (a) the

centrality of race and other forms of oppression, (b) the challenge to the dominant ideology, and

deficit perspectives, (c) a commitment to social justice, (d) the centrality of experiential

knowledge, and (e) a transdisciplinary perspective.

The first tenet, the centrality of race, suggests that racism is embedded throughout the

fabric of U.S. society (Bell, 1992; Crenshaw, 1993, 2021; Delgado, 1995a; Yosso et al., 2009).

Further, racism is deeply ingrained in the fabric of U.S. history and is almost unrecognizable in

our educational systems (Lynn & Parker, 2006). As a result, White/Eurocentric norms continue to pervade the institution's organizational structure and physical spaces (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). For example, multicultural centers were created to support Students of Color. However, some scholars argued that White senior administrators established multicultural centers as a way to present a facade that issues with equity were not prevalent on the college campus (Patton et al., 2007). However, these centers continue to be undervalued and often lack physical space and resources because they are not seen as spaces for White students. Therefore, the first tenet, centrality of race, was used to illuminate the long-standing history of racism in higher education and how it continues to impact People of Color on college campuses (Jones & Squire, 2018).

The second tenet of CRT, the challenge to the dominant ideology and deficit perspectives, disputes the myth of meritocracy, neutrality, and colorblindness. Theorists and educators argued that one's upward social mobility is impacted by one's race, social class, and gender (Geiger, 2002; Hossler et al., 1989; McDonough, 1997; Teranishi et al., 2004). For example, scholars continued to highlight that White individuals dominate positions of power in organizations in higher education; whereas racial and ethnic marginalized people are overrepresented in entry-level and mid-level positions and experience barriers to advancing in their careers (Burke & Carter, 2015; Dlamini & Adams, 2014; Gardner et al., 2014; Glass & Cook, 2020; Webster & Brown, 2019). Regarding this dissertation study, researchers argued that diversity work is often not seen as legitimate (Patton et al., 2019). The location of a multicultural center within the organizational chart dictates how much influence directors have on integrating diversity initiatives into the university's strategic priorities. Many multicultural centers are housed in student affairs divisions, which historically has less influence on leadership and policy development. As such, People of Color are often hired to supervise and manage a multicultural

center. If multicultural centers continue to lack the agency to make change, administrators of color continue to be at a disadvantage when compared to their White colleagues. Therefore, the second tenet, the challenge to the dominant ideology and deficit perspectives, highlights that upward mobility in higher education is racialized, and People of Color who work in multicultural centers are at risk of experiencing barriers to career advancement and success.

The third tenet, commitment to social justice, addresses the activism component of the theory. Social justice is defined as both a process and a goal to address systemic prejudices and inequities related to issues such as race, class, and gender (Drago-Severson & Blum-DeStefano, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 2020; Liou & Alvara, 2021). Moreover, social justice envisions a society where all members participate equally and where resources are distributed equitably. Multicultural center directors in higher education have a key role in cultivating a learning environment that encourages and supports equity, diversity, and inclusion (Patton, 2006). This tenet applies to this dissertation because it allowed these administrators to share their strategies for campus equity. Furthermore, as the researcher conducting this study and publishing the findings, I am engaged in activism.

The fourth tenet, the centrality of experiential knowledge, brings forth the experiences and stories of People of Color (Hurtado et al, 1999; Yosso et al., 2009). White norms have been embedded in the culture and structure of higher education since its founding in the 17th century (Cabrera, 2014; Corona et al., 2017). However, CRT legitimizes the experiences of racial and ethnic marginalized people through models such as storytelling, narratives, and testimonials (Bell, 1987; Carrasco, 1996; Delgado, 1989, 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996; Olivas, 1990). Through the use of storytelling, the participants of this proposed dissertation had the opportunity to confront the dominant narrative and provide accurate depictions of their lived experiences as

People of Color who work in multicultural centers (Clandinin, 2007; Geertz, 1973; Parker &

Stovall, 2004; Watson, 2006). As I highlighted in Chapter 1, the voice of multicultural center

directors is missing in the literature.

The final and fifth tenet, the transdisciplinary perspective, requires scholars and activists

to draw from various disciplines, including sociology, psychology, history, ethnic studies,

women's studies, and law, to conceptualize the social structures, practices, and discourses that

impact People of Color from various disciplines (Cabrera, 2014, 2019; Smith-Maddox &

Solórzano, 2002; Yosso et al., 2009). Literature was sought from various disciplines to help

better understand the lived experiences of the participants in this study.

The experiences of People of Color in higher education have been viewed through the

dominant White Eurocentric lens; thus, there is a misinterpretation of the former's experiences in

the literature (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Wright, 2022). CRT theorists argued that traditional

research paradigms are approached from a deficit perspective, meaning that People of Color are

often blamed for their outcomes (e.g., burnout, health, and wellness). Instead, research should

challenge how race and racism impact educational structures at the expense of People of Color;

therefore, the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities are distorted in research because of the

dominant Eurocentric lens (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). CRT was an appropriate theoretical and

analytical framework for this dissertation study because CRT scholars indicated that

multicultural centers continue to experience minimal investment from higher education

institutions, and directors of these spaces face criticism and skepticism. As a result, multicultural

center administrators, who are often People of Color, experience isolation and tokenism which

impact their health, wellness, and career upward mobility. Utilizing CRT acknowledged the

historical formation of multicultural centers, revealed the work conditions of the People of Color,

and pointed out the barriers that hinder the success of multicultural centers' director's ability to address campus inequity. With the increasing attention of campus leaders seeking to improve campus culture, utilizing CRT brought forth an analysis that is missing from the existing literature.

Theory of Racial Tasks (TRT)

The Theory of Racial Tasks (TRT) is the second theoretical framework for this dissertation, which pays particular attention to how People of Color carry out racial tasks in an organization. Similar to CRT, this theoretical framework looks at organizational actors as opposed to focusing solely on the individuals. Racial tasks are defined as the invisible labor invested by People of Color to address systemic racism (Wooten & Couloute, 2017), as well as "to smooth over or conceal perceptions of racial difference" (Wingfield & Alston, 2014, p. 285). Multicultural center directors carry out racial tasks to ease racial tensions experienced by Students of Color (Lerma et al., 2020). Therefore, using TRT helped strengthen my understanding of the racial tasks assigned to multicultural center directors and the impact of these tasks. According to TRT scholars, there are three levels of racial tasks within an organization, and each level, "connects the organizational structure of the workplace to the cultural and social practices within that serve to reproduce racial inequality" (Wingfield & Alston, 2014, p. 275). In the following section, I will review how racial tasks are operationalized in higher education: the physical, interactional, and ideological levels.

Racial Tasks at the Physical Level

The first presence of racial tasks within an organization occurs at the physical level. The physical level is defined as the institution's infrastructure and the visibility and invisibility of specific employees (Wingfield & Alston, 2014). At some institutions of higher education, the

chosen decor, artwork, and names of academic buildings are often associated with White men (Loewen, 1999; Wingfield & Alston, 2014). In addition to the names of buildings, the physical location and size of administrative offices communicate what services are valued at the university. For example, the president and provost offices are often large in size and located in central locations that are visible and accessible to all. On the contrary, multicultural centers are often smaller and on the outskirts of campus. Wingfield and Alston (2014) argued, "the confinement of … People of Color to designated spaces with limited visibility serves to reinforce the organization as a White space" (p. 283). If multicultural centers serve Students of Color, and these centers are inaccessible on campus, the programmatic efforts to address systemic racism are compromised. Exploring racial tasks at the physical level was key to understanding the research question.

Racial Tasks at the Interactional Level

The second presence of racial tasks within an organization occurs at the interactional level. In contrast to racial tasks at the physical level, the interactional level represents the day-to-day racialized interactions Employees of Color have with associates and managers in predominantly-White business settings (Wingfield & Alston, 2014). The rules of social interaction in the workplace differ for People of Color, and as a result, they may face professional consequences for their actions (Lerma et al., 2020). For example, a multicultural center director is hired by an institution of higher education to identify and address inequality on the college campus; however, researchers documented that professionals who engage in diversity work are often siloed and experience racial trauma. In addition, when Employees of Color are faced with inappropriate racial interactions in the workplace, they may feel compelled to minimize their response for fear of becoming an outcast by colleagues and supervisors (Wooten

& Couloute, 2017). This response, however, endorses White/Eurocentric norms at the expense of racial and ethnic marginalized people (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Teranishi et al., 2009; Wooten & Couloute, 2017). When People of Color choose to be silent or want to be perceived as non-confrontational, this reaction maintains White privilege within organizations (Wingfield & Alton, 2014; Wilson, 1997; Wilson & McBrier, 2005). Therefore, exploring racial tasks at the interactional level is central to the proposed dissertation question. That is, exploring the racialized experiences of multicultural center directors provides insight into how they navigate racialized interactions across students, colleagues, and supervisors.

Racial Tasks at the Ideological Level

The final dimension of racial tasks within the workplace is the ideological level. Racial tasks at the ideological level refer to cultural norms that are in place yet invisible to the human eye. Today, White culture is treated as the standard in higher education (Anderson, 2001; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Lerma et al., 2020). This standard dates back to 1626, when the colonial government chose to create Harvard University to prepare affluent White males to assume leadership positions in the clergy (Stewart, 2020; Thelin, 2011). Four hundred years later, higher education continues to utilize educational accessibility and hiring practices to maintain Whites in positions of power (Wooten & Couloute, 2017). When racial and ethnic minorities advance to executive levels, they are often asked to manage programs for Employees of Color, create support initiatives for People of Color, facilitate diversity training, or assist with designing solutions for organizational change (Haynes et al., 2020; Lerma et al., 2020; Tomaskovic-Devey, 1993; Wingfield & Alston, 2014). Founders of the racial tasks theory, Wingfield and Alston (2014), stated that when minority executives assume these roles, they maintain White organizational culture via these racial tasks. As a result, racialized tasks shield White leaders

from addressing racism, and serve as a physical barrier between White managers and Employees of Color. Further, the assumption becomes that racial and ethnic minorities are best suited for diversity-related tasks, whereas White executives are suited to serve as business managers and policymakers (Acker, 1990; Mejia et al., 2022). The phenomenon of racial tasks at the ideological level unveiled cultural norms that perpetuate racial hierarchies that negatively impact multicultural center directors. Focusing on the hierarchical nature of racialized work in higher education revealed its impact on multicultural center directors of color.

Rationale for Theoretical Approaches

Cultural centers have 50 years of history, yet there is very limited empirical research that explores the lived experiences of the administrators' who lead these spaces. Directors of multicultural centers are tasked to address institutional racism, yet not much is known about these directors' work experiences. Knowing about these experiences will provide insight on the support that diversity administrators need in higher education. The two aforementioned theoretical frameworks assisted me with conceptualizing the study. Specifically, CRT placed racism in the center of the research process and gave voice to the participants (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). TRT highlighted the invisible and undervalued racial labor conducted by People of Color. Utilizing both theories provided the framework to understand the phenomenon as it relates to the experiences of multicultural center directors in higher education. Furthermore, it was important to situate the analysis within an organizational perspective and highlight the oppressive organizational norms within higher education.

Review of the Literature

Beginning in 2016, diversity initiatives were yet again at the forefront of institutional strategic plans due to the resurgence of college student protests (Harper, 2020). In particular,

Students of Color were responding to institutional racism, senior leaders were creating

multicultural centers, and multicultural center directors were called upon to serve as experts and

contribute a significant amount of time to assist their campuses through turmoil.

I begin this literature review with the history of student protests and activism that led to

cultural centers' development in higher education. I then provide literature on the systemic

challenges, followed by the work experiences of higher education administrators of color

(Biondi, 2012; Douglas et al., 2020; Patton, 2010; Rogers, 2012). I end with the implications of

conducting racialized work and discuss how the proposed research study contributes to the

scholarship. It should be noted that there is a lack of empirical research in peer-reviewed journals

on cultural centers, therefore conceptual articles and book chapters will be the primary resources

due to a lack of empiricism.

History of Student Resistance in Higher Education

Multicultural centers are the outcome of Students of Color who resisted against

oppressive campus climates; therefore, to examine the experiences of multicultural center

directors, one must first grasp the history of racial inequality in higher education. I first present a

historical timeline of the student activists of the 1920s.

Student Activism and Demands in the 1920s-1940s

Since the establishment of colleges and universities during the Colonial Era under British

Rule, African American students were excluded from higher education (Thelin, 2011). It was not

until the end of the Civil War that free African Americans and White abolitionists established a

few Black colleges in the north, including Cheyney University, Lincoln University, and

Wilberforce University (Alford, 2020; Thelin, 2011). At the end of the Civil War, additional

Black colleges opened in the south: Fisk University, Howard University, Hampton Institute,

Oakwood College, and Talladega College. The curriculum at most of these institutions during this era adopted "plantation behavior" (Alford, 2020, p. 22), whereby Whites perceived African Americans, "as projects of charity or as a community of people who needed saving from unscrupulous moral behavior" (Alford, 2020, p. 25). Whites controlled African American students' dress/attire, employment opportunities, and behavior while on campus. In particular, Black college students were required to sing slave spirituals and plantation songs to White faculty and administrators during required chapel services (Alford, 2020; Logan, 1969).

During the 1920s-1940s, Black academic scholars and activists such as W.E.B. DuBois, Carter G. Woodson, Kelly Williams, and E. Franklin Fraizer motivated Black college students to resist the oppressive culture on their college campuses (Franklin, 2003). These scholars are credited with, "building and shaping the social and political discourse on race as it pertained to African American education in the United States" (Alford, 2020, p. 18). According to Rogers (2012), a pivotal moment in the history of Black student activism occurred after W.E.B. Du Bois delivered a speech at Fisk University in 1924. He condemned and criticized the administration's treatment of Black students. Further, he encouraged students to boycott the institution. As a result, the Black students at Fisk University rallied against the administration and demanded a change in organizational governance, faculty composition, student life, and the student code of conduct (Rogers, 2012). In the weeks to follow, Black students rebelled against campus leaders; they broke curfew, refused to attend classes, and marched throughout campus chanting. The campus unrest at Fisk University lasted months, and ultimately the president resigned. Most of the student demands were met under new institutional leadership.

Student Activism and Demands in the 1960s-1970s

It was not until the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that African American college students' enrollment at PWIs increased (Gasman, 2007; Geiger, 2002). Upon arrival on these campuses, Black college students existed in small numbers, were often separated in different residence halls from White students, and experienced hostile and unwelcoming campus environments (Biondi, 2012). Some Black students at this time believed that if they worked hard, they would be accepted by Whites (Biondi, 2012). However, Black students were perceived as deficient by most White faculty and university administrators. These students were expected to assimilate to "White culture, White customs, and White thinking" (Biondi, 2012, p. 16). Campus administrators, faculty, and staff did very little to support Black students (McFeeters, 2010). Over time, many Black college students grew increasingly tired of the lack of assistance from White faculty and administrators, so the students began forming support groups amongst themselves to combat their experiences with racism and isolation (Biondi, 2012; Gasman et al., 2015; Massey et al., 2003).

The establishment of these student-led groups coincided with the Black Power Movement alongside the activists' teachings of Stokely Carmichael and Malcolm X; thus, some student groups shifted from support spaces to spaces to engage in militant activism and resistance against White-controlled institutions (Biondi, 2012; Rogers, 2012; McElderry & Rivera, 2017). In 1963, Malcolm X publicly argued that African Americans were used as tokens within the educational system. Black college students began to pay attention to how tokenism operated on their college campuses (Biondi, 2012). Between 1968 and 1969, there were over 200 student-organized protests across higher education institutions where Black students rejected their poor treatment (Biondi, 2012).

Student activism reached its pinnacle in 1968 after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. As a result, student activists demanded a curriculum that integrated Black culture and African American history (Biondi, 2012). In addition, Black students requested social and cultural spaces on campus that would embrace their Black identity. As a result, Black college students pressured university administrators to meet their list of demands, which included the development of Black Cultural Centers (BCCs), Black-themed housing, and Africana studies. These demands were met, and BCCs were officially established on college campuses (Biondi, 2012; Patton et al., 2019).

The Creation of Cultural Centers in the 1960s-1970s

Patton (2010) published the first book on the development of race-specific cultural centers in higher education. In her book, she identified Rutgers University as the first predominantly white institution (PWI) to establish an African American Cultural Center, the Paul Robeson Cultural Center, in 1967 (Patton, 2010), with other PWIs following in 1968. These cultural centers were often staffed by faculty or administrators of color who provided interventions to alleviate Black college students' experiences with less than equitable treatment (Ancis et al., 2000; Patton, 2006; Patton, 2010; Sutton, 1998; Young & Hannon, 2002). BCCs were seen by students as spaces of resistance, a home away from home, and a physical symbol to hold institutional leaders accountable (Patton, 2010). These centers provided the following student support services: (a) workshops; (b) psychological support groups; (c) mentorship; (d) cultural and social celebrations; (e) leadership opportunities; and (f) academic support services (Sutton, 1998; Williamson, 1999).

As enrollment of other racially underrepresented students increased at higher education institutions (e.g., Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander, American Indian and Native

American), these students also verbalized their concerns with racial hostility, isolation, and lack

of institutional support (Benitez, 2010; Harper, 2020; Shuford, 2011). These Students of Color

also demanded diversity support services on campus similar to the services provided to Black

students (Shuford, 2011). As a result, PWIs felt pressured to create additional cultural centers

(Benitez, 2010). In 1969, Northeastern University established El Centro for Latina/o students. In

the same year, the University of California Los Angeles created the Asian American Studies

Center for Asian American and Pacific Islander students. And, in 1972, the University of North

Dakota-Grand Forks founded the American Indian Center for American Indian and Native

American students (Patton, 2010). Similar to African American cultural centers, these spaces

were an institution's commitment to recruit, retain, and support ethnic minority students at PWIs

(Reid & Ebede, 2018). The staff of these spaces were tasked to serve as mediators between the

racial and ethnic marginalized students and the White campus administration, provide space for

conversations and academic support (Hefner, 2002). The staff of cultural centers, who often

identified as a similar race of the students whom they served, also were charged to communicate

to senior leaders about the needs and experiences of these students. However, unlike African

American cultural centers, many of the Latino cultural centers in the Midwest were staffed by

graduate and undergraduate students (Lozano, 2010).

Development of Minority Student Services in the 1980s-1990s

During the 1980s and 1990s, some universities eliminated racial/ethnic group-specific

cultural centers (e.g., BCCs) or expanded them into the umbrella unit called minority student

services (MSS). Instead of focusing on race, MSSs expanded their role to encompass all

historically underrepresented students on campus including those who identified as gay, lesbian,

and transgender; women, students of marginalized religions; first-generation students, students

with disabilities; and older adults (Patton, 2010; Patton & Hannon, 2008). MSSs provided

academic advising, facilitated support groups (e.g., coming-out), advised all multicultural student

groups, and led university-wide multicultural training to improve the campus climate for all

underrepresented students (Shuford, 2011). Further, MSSs assisted White students with

understanding the power and privilege associated with their race (Benitez, 2010; Shuford, 2011).

The dismantling of race-based cultural centers for a targeted student group (e.g., Black

college students) caused an uproar, and some scholars perceived the development of MSSs

derailed the original purpose of race-based centers, such as BCCs (Hefner, 2002; Princes, 1994).

Scholars argued that the establishment of MSSs shielded PWIs from taking ownership of the

ways in which racism impacted Students of Color on college campuses (Princes, 1994). For

example, some MSSs focused on heritage months and cultural celebrations instead of addressing

the ways racism impacted the success and retention of Black students (Taylor, 2000).

Many university administrators began to question the effectiveness of MSSs (Patton,

2006). For example, MSSs provided a counter space for all marginalized students; however,

student caseloads were large, staffing was scant, administrators needed to have the knowledge

and historical training on the various marginalized identities, and when students rallied against

senior administration, MSSs staff were expected to respond and resolve all types of conflict

rooted in oppression. Furthermore, single race-based cultural centers provided opportunities for

Faculty of Color interested in partnering with cultural centers to discuss relevant issues about

their group's identity. The erasure of a single racial identity center limited faculty members'

ability to connect to a space that matched their racial identity (Yosso & Lopez, 2010).

Thus far, I have provided a historical overview of the establishment of multicultural

centers in higher education. In the section to follow, I will provide an overview of the literature

that explores the experiences of the administrators who are responsible for leading multicultural

centers on college campuses. Similar to the section above, there is little empirical research on

multicultural centers and their directors; therefore, the section to follow also comes from

empirical research studies, conceptual articles, and book chapters.

Challenges Experienced by Cultural Center Staff

A cultural center on a college campus supports the success and retention of

underrepresented students (Patton, 2010), and yet, cultural centers lack institutional support.

Administrators who direct diversity efforts in higher education reported instances of systemic

challenges such as color-blind rhetoric, invalidation from staff and students, limited funding,

unrealistic workloads, and invalidation from senior administration (Harris & Patton, 2017; Patton

et al, 2019; Reid & Ebede, 2018; Stewart & Bridges, 2011). As a result of their racialized

experiences, Administrators of Color experience health and wellness issues.

Invalidation and Financial Neglect

Using organizational identity theory and intersectionality theory as their framework,

Harris and Patton's (2017) qualitative research study explored how BCC directors supported

Black students' intersectional identities (e.g., race and gender identity). Ten BCC directors from

across the country who self-identified as Black or African American were interviewed via phone;

nine out of the 10 participants worked at a research university. Although the researchers were

looking at intersectionality, the theme of systemic challenges (e.g., post racial ideology and lack

of funding) emerged from the data. The BCC directors reported encountering staff and students

who did not think the BCC was necessary because they believed the election of former President

Barack Obama resolved racial inequality. Some students, both White and Black, questioned the

relevance of the cultural center and the programming it offered (e.g., mentoring, programming,

and campus-wide advocacy for Black students). In turn, these students were not interested in

what the BCC had to offer. In addition to students not seeing the value of a cultural center for

Black students, participants also faced resistance from staff who assumed that Students of Color

did not have negative campus experiences. As a result, there was a lack of support from staff,

and in turn students underutilized the BCC. The lack of funding was a second systemic challenge

faced by the participants. Participants reported that limited funding did not allow them the

opportunity to provide support to all Students of Color. Further, the lack of funding hindered the

BCC to hire additional staff. One participant reported a caseload of 2,200 Students of Color. The

post racial rhetoric and lack of funding hindered the BCC director's ability to engage in

addressing racial inequities.

Stewart and Bridges' quantitative study (2011) aimed to develop a demographic profile

of multicultural student services (MSS) on college campuses. The purpose of their study was to

fill the gaps in understanding MSS units as it relates to their operational structure, the services

that they provide, as well as their vision and goals. The researchers used a questionnaire, Survey

of Multicultural Student Services developed by Bridges, Cubarubbia, and Stewart (2008). The

survey asked respondents to answer questions surrounding institutional information (i.e.,

classification, racial demographics), program information (i.e., founding history, reporting

structure), personnel information (i.e., number of employees, the salary range of employees)

facilities (i.e., location, space utilization), services provided (i.e., academic programming,

assessment), and finally how the MSS was viewed by students, faculty and staff. Stewart and

Bridges (2011) distributed the survey to 464 members of the American College Personnel

Association (ACPA) who identified that they work in multicultural student services. The survey

yielded 134 responses with 97% of the participants reporting working at a four-year institution

and 96% reporting working at a PWI. Similar to Harris and Patton (2017) above, participants

reported that they lacked campus support. Only 11.9% stated that their senior administration was

supportive. Student attitudes toward multicultural student services were received a bit more

positively with 14.9% of participants stating that students were supportive and interested in their

services. Additionally, some participants indicated that students and faculty were unaware that

the center existed on their campus. As it pertains to funding, 27.6% of the participants did not

have support staff, and 76.9% of the participants reported reliance on part time staff, volunteers,

and student workers. Further, 81.7% of the participants stated that the allocated budget was

insufficient and expressed an urgency for additional financial and human resources.

Scholars Patton et al. (2019) conducted a critical analysis of the research on the various

diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice (DIEJ) initiatives implemented in higher education

between 1968 to 2018. The guiding question was, "what types of specific DIEJ initiatives were

highlighted in educational research between 1968–2018?" (Patton et al., 2019, p. 181). The

researchers collected data from 45 empirical articles in nine educational journals including, but

not limited to, Equity and Excellence in Higher Education, Journal of College Student

Development, Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, and the Review of Higher Education. Of

the 45 articles, 21 were qualitative, 18 were quantitative, and six were mixed methods. The

majority of the articles focused on student support services (i.e., diversity programs and cultural

centers), and an additional 14 focused on curriculum initiatives (i.e., undergraduate diversity

classes). Twelve articles focused on leadership and administration (i.e., Chief Diversity Officer

roles, leadership, and training) and the remaining eight focused on institutional policies related to

diversity (i.e., affirmative action).

Although Patton et al.'s (2019) study aimed to explore research on formalized diversity initiatives in higher education, a theme that emerged from the data was the lack of funding necessary for DIEJ initiatives. Patton et al. (2019) argued that a majority of the articles included in this study highlighted that although institutional leaders made verbal commitments to diversity and inclusion, these initiatives lacked the financial investment from institutional leaders (i.e., president, provosts, board of trustees). The authors stated that diversity work is rendered less important when compared to other administrative offices; therefore, diversity initiatives such as a cultural center continue to be treated as external entities and are seen to not have much academic benefit to the institution.

Reid and Ebede (2018) conducted a mixed methods study that explored students' perceptions of the purpose, impact, and future of cultural centers at PWIs. The participants were 54 undergraduate and graduate students who studied at a PWI. Of this pool, 83% of the participants reported that a multicultural center existed on their campus, and 17% reported a specific race-based center existed on their campus. Participants were recruited from four professional associations: National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators Region IV, Association of Black Culture Centers, and the Housing and Residence Life Network. Four themes emerged from the data, and the findings suggested that students understand the purpose of the need of a cultural or race-based center in higher education; however, they worried about the lack of impact the center made on their campuses as a result of insufficient funding. Student participants reported that the lack of funding was a result of senior administration undermining the value of the space.

The research studies presented in this section of the dissertation contribute to our understanding of the challenges experienced by cultural center directors such as defending the

existence of their cultural center, responding to invalidation, and operating with limited finances and staff. The depletion of finances and staff impacts a cultural center's ability to provide adequate programming and support to Students of Color. Although researchers from the studies suggested cultural center directors work in environments that lack support, they did not discuss how resistance impacts their work. Therefore, a qualitative research approach will bring forward the voices and lived experiences of cultural center directors, which in turn will challenge dominant structures and hold institutions of higher education accountable.

Cultural Centers Serve as Mini University Systems

College Students of Color experience isolation, racism, and microaggressions when admitted to PWIs (Carthell et al., 2021; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Lutz et al., 2013; Pittman, 1994; Watson et al., 2002). As a result of these unwelcoming experiences, Students of Color often retreat to multicultural centers as these spaces serve as a safe haven. The staff of multicultural centers provide students with the support services that are often the responsibility of other departments. These services include academic advising, campus engagement, counseling, and psychological services, as an example (Hypolite, 2020b; Patton, 2006; Reid & Ebede, 2018).

Patton (2006) conducted a phenomenological research study, grounded in CRT, with the aim to understand how Black college students experienced and utilized the Institute of Black Culture (IBC) at the University of Florida, which is a PWI. The director of the IBC identified 11 students to serve as participants in the study. Data were collected via semi structured interviews. The themes from the data suggested that Black college students felt unwelcomed and unwanted at the university; therefore, students relied heavily on the IBC for academic support services, co-curricular programming, and emotional support for issues such as homesickness. In addition,

participants sought out the IBC for social and educational events that integrated their Black

culture into the programs (e.g., new student orientation programs, workshops, and mentorship).

The Students of Color relied heavily on the IBC staff because these students felt that the staff of

the center could relate to their lived experiences as being racial minorities at a PWI.

Luedke (2017) conducted a qualitative study exploring how Administrators of Color

mentored first-generation Black, Latinx, and Biracial students. The author utilized Bourdieu's

1994 social reproduction theory as the theoretical framework. The study took place at two PWIs

in the Midwest of the U.S.; one institution had an enrollment of 87% White students, and the

other had 90% White student enrollment. A total of 24 students from both sites served as the

participants for the study. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews that explored

how students describe their relationships with staff at the college. Two major themes emerged

from the data. The first theme suggested that White administrators did not understand the

experiences of Students of Color; thus, the White administrators did not provide holistic support.

Therefore, Students of Color felt no other choice but to seek out Administrators of Color who in

turn provided holistic support with an emphasis to nurture and take care of the student. The Staff

of Color in the study took an interest to learn about the students' familial experiences,

acknowledged their concerns as a student, and identified opportunities for student success (e.g.,

scholarships, course selections, student leadership conferences for Students of Color). The

second theme that emerged from the data was the value of honesty in advising relationships.

Many of the participants indicated that the trust in the advising relationship contributed to their

success as Students of Color at their institution. The final theme emphasized the availability of

the staff. Many participants indicated that their White advisors were difficult to meet with;

however, the Staff of Color were available around the clock and outside of the normal business

hours. As the title of the study reads, the Staff of Color focused on the person first and student identity second meaning that they centered the students' identity in the mentoring relationship and truly valued other aspects of the students' lives besides academic performance.

Hypolite (2020b) conducted an ethnographic qualitative research study that explored how a BCC impacted Black college students' racial identity development. The site of this study was a BCC at a large, private, and historically White institution on the west coast of the United States with less than 5% of the student population identifying as Black (Hypolite, 2020b). Data were collected via observation of student interactions with the BCC staff, and individual interviews. A total of 50 observation hours were documented, and 22 interviews were conducted, which included 19 students and two professional staff members. To address the research question, participants were asked about their racial identity and what role, if any, does the BCC play. Three central findings emerged from the data regarding their personal racial identity, the diversity across Blackness, and common experiences. Although the study aimed to explore racial identity, participants discussed the ways in which the BCC staff protected students from negative campus experiences. BCC staff members provided Black students with academic, social, and psychosocial support. Similar to the Luedke (2017) study presented above, instead of utilizing other departments on campuses such as the tutoring center, student activities, and the counseling center, Black students relied on the BCC staff for comfort because of their shared experiences in higher education.

Further, the aforementioned quantitative study conducted by Stewart and Bridges (2011), is the only study within the literature that provided a profile of the extensive tasks assigned to multicultural center staff. As stated earlier, 134 participants were asked to provide an overview of their day-to-day job duties. The duties reported were as follows: organizing academic

enrichment services (e.g., tutoring, study skills workshops, summer bridge programming, first-year transition courses, academic advising), hosting co-curricular programs (e.g., advising student clubs and organizations, hosting heritage month events), assisting senior leaders with assessing campus climates (e.g., coordinating campus-wide diversity plans, serving as consultants to senior administrators during campus turmoil, conducting professional development training for faculty and staff), and contributing to enrollment management (e.g., recruiting Students of Color to the university). Additional duties included coordinating financial aid packages to offset the cost of school (e.g., identifying scholarships and grants for students), managing daily operations of the center, staff supervision, programming oversight, budgeting, and serving as a liaison to campus partners. Stewart and Bridges (2011) acknowledged that the multicultural student services offices within this study functioned similarly to a college within a college which in turn meant that the directors were overtasked with duties and responsibilities to support Students of Color.

As evidenced in the studies presented in this section, higher education campuses continue to foster environments that exclude racially minoritized students; thus, multicultural center directors often complete job responsibilities that mirror the duties of large divisional units housed within student affairs, academic affairs, and enrollment management (Hypolite, 2020b; Luedke, 2017; Patton, 2006; Reid & Ebede, 2018). What is missing from these studies are the directors' voices who lead these spaces. Luedke (2017), Patton (2006) and Hypolite (2020b) collected data from students, and although Stewart and Bridges (2011) collected data from administrators, their methodology was quantitative and thus did not capture in-depth descriptions from these participants. Further research is needed to expand our understanding of the duties

reported by multicultural center directors, which in turn will increase our understanding of the implications of this heavy lift.

The Consequences of Addressing Racism

As Students of Color continue to experience hostile campus climates, they rely on People of Color at their campuses for support, guidance, and validation (Hypolite, 2020b; Luedke, 2017; Patton, 2006; Stewart & Bridges, 2011). This support contributes to students' sense of belonging, retention, and persistence through higher education. However, as documented above, staff of cultural centers offer a wide array of student services that mirror the duties of multiple functional areas across campus (Shuford, 2011). What is unknown are the negative implications associated with this heavy lift. Unfortunately, there is not much research that examines the consequences experienced by multicultural center administrators of color, so I will draw upon the research that speaks about general higher education administrators of color.

In 1986, The Handbook of Minority Student Services was published with the intent to help university administrators establish MSSs on their college campuses. This resource guide insisted that People of Color should be hired to serve as minority directors because they reflect the students whom they served and can counter student's exposure to hostile racial educational climates. Therefore, BCCs were directed by Black faculty who were perceived as specialists with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to mitigate Black students' experiences with institutional racism (Reid & Ebede, 2018). Unfortunately, this shielded White administrators from the responsibility of addressing systemic issues that impact the student of color experience.

Thirty-seven years since the publication of the handbook, researchers asserted that institutions of higher education continue to place an overwhelming amount of work on People of Color to execute racial tasks for the organization (Lerma et al., 2020; Patton et al., 2019; Reid &

Ebede, 2018). People of Color in higher education are sought to fulfill formalized diversity roles (e.g., director of cultural centers, chief diversity officers), or hired for generic administrative roles (e.g., student affairs positions) with the assumption that they will be able to support Students of Color, sit on diversity committees, and serve as experts on diversity issues (Lerma et al., 2020; Patton et al., 2019).

In 2018, Steele conducted a qualitative, phenomenological study, grounded in CRT and counter storytelling, that aimed to explore the work experiences of Staff of Color who worked at, or previously worked at, a PWI in the Midwest. Steele (2018) argued that most research studies explored the experiences of faculty of color; therefore, she conducted this research on 18 administrators of color who worked in student affairs roles. Of the 18 participants, two were past employees of the institution. Data were collected utilizing semi-structured interviews, and participants were asked to discuss, (a) what factors kept them at the institution, (b) what factors led them to leave the institution, and (c) how institutional leaders can support minority employees. Four themes emerged from the data, 1) negative work environments, 2) being invisible as an employee, 3) lack of support, and 4) navigating campus culture. Participants reported microaggressions, lack of acceptance, levels of discomfort in certain spaces, and being undervalued and invisible (e.g., not being acknowledged in meetings, not having agency to make change, not seeing People of Color in senior leadership roles). Participants felt pressured to support Students of Color, which was not within their job description. Participants shared their frustration in the differences in workload between themselves and their White colleagues; thus, reporting feeling under-valued and overworked. When asked about their methods of navigating their roles, many participants reported being "cautious" and "staying under the radar" (p. 119) to protect their physical and mental health. The findings of this research further support the

difficulties faced by Staff of Color as they adhere to a set of extra tasks outside of their work

duties (e.g., supporting Students of Color) without support or acknowledgment from colleagues

and senior leadership.

Gomez et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative research study that aimed to explore the

experiences of Staff of Color in higher education. Similar to Steele (2018), these authors chose to

focus on staff because they believed that the professional status is not held to high esteem when

compared to faculty who have tenure and positions of power within the academy. Fifteen Staff of

Color served as participants for the study. Data was collected using multi-hour life history

interviews over a timespan of two years, 2012-2014. While the researchers interviewed 15

participants, they presented data on two participants who were responsible for diversity

initiatives (e.g., recruitment and retention of Students of Color, assisting faculty to diversify their

curriculum). The authors do not explain their rationale for selecting these two women. The

participants in this study spoke about their experiences with White, faculty, staff and students

who invalidated their competence and work. The two participants attributed the lack of support

to the organizational structures that placed White men and women in positions of power and

People of Color in roles that lacked agency to make decisions about university priorities. As a

result of this opposition, one participant spoke to their experiences with high blood pressure,

stress, and racial battle fatigue. Racial battle fatigue was defined in Chapter 1 and is the

physiological and psychological consequence People of Color face when fighting against racism

(Smith, 2008). The findings of this research bring forth the health and wellness consequences

People of Color experience when addressing racial disparities in their work settings.

Nixon (2017) conducted a qualitative study, grounded in CRT and Critical Race

Feminism, with Women of Color who served as chief diversity officer (CDOs) at institutions of

higher education. Nixon's research question aimed to explore how Women of Color described their challenges and day to day realities as CDOs. Five Women of Color served as the participants for the study. Three identified as Black/African American, and two identified as Latina. All five women stated that they were the only racial minority on the President's cabinet, and four out of the five reported that this was their first CDO role. The length of time in the role ranged from seven months to 10 years. The professional background of the participants varied among Counseling, Education, Law, and Psychology. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews that lasted 75-120 minutes. The researcher also collected data from the website which included documents such as institutional initiatives related to diversity, strategic plans, and articles in the student's newspaper. From the data collected, four themes emerged from the data, 1) their work is personal to their identity, 2) they experience isolation, 3) and microaggressions, and 4) they wrestle with being an outsider in a predominately White setting.

The results of the study concluded that all five CDOs experienced discrimination, isolation, microaggressions, and stereotypes (Nixon, 2017). The participants explained that they developed strategies to navigate through racist and oppressive structures which often included avoiding people who impeded progress. Participants indicated that White colleagues felt threatened by their role at the institution; therefore, they reported challenges finding allies. Furthermore, CDOs found themselves exerting additional energy when responding to microaggressions made by White colleagues. For example, participants spent extra time thinking about their words, tone, body language, and emails to avoid being seen as difficult to colleagues. As a result, participants reported not feeling they could be themselves in the workplace. The findings of this research study highlighted the complicated nature of the CDO work experienced by Women of Color. Diversity roles in higher education require advocacy for marginalized

groups to majority White administrators; however, this study suggested this work, while at the most senior level, may also come at a cost (e.g., further isolation, tokenism, lukewarm institutional commitment) (Nixon, 2017).

Chapter Summary

Academia is reflective of the larger society and racial and ethnic minority students are subjected to experience campus racism at PWIs (Gorski, 2019; Gorski & Chen, 2015; Hurtado et al., 1998; Joseph & Hirshfield, 2011; Smith, 2008). There is a large body of research that documents the lived experiences of racial and ethnic minority students (Ancis et al., 2000; Harper, 2015; Harper et al., 2018; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Ndemanu, 2017; Worthington et al., 2008), and although research has led to recommendations to alleviate Students of Color experiences with unwelcoming campus climates (i.e., providing support services such as multicultural centers), the literature does not speak to the experiences of the Administrators of Color who support Students of Color. Therefore, in the chapter to follow, I provide an overview of my research methods used to understand the lived experiences of multicultural center directors of color.

Chapter 3: Methodology

In the previous chapter, I provided a review of the literature on the experiences of university administrators who work in multicultural centers on college campuses such as Black Cultural Centers (BCCs) and Minority Student Services (MSSs). Contributors to this area of research suggested that these administrators faced challenges in executing their duties as a result of institutional practices that presented organizational barriers. The administrators reported limited financial and human resources, inadequate office space, and a lack of institutional support. Further, multicultural center administrators experienced skepticism from faculty and staff which in turn impacted campus buy-in (Harris & Patton, 2017; Reid & Ebede, 2018). These barriers negatively impacted cultural center administrators (Jenkins, 2016; Marcy, 2004; Moses, 1993; Patton, 2011; Poussaint, 1974). As a result, some administrators reported that they struggled to meet the needs of the students they serve (Harris & Patton, 2017; Hypolite, 2020a; Patton, 2006).

The majority of the research presented in Chapter 2 focused on single race-based cultural centers, specifically BCCs, and one study focused on MSSs. However, to date, there are no empirical studies that examined the experiences of administrators who direct a multicultural center that supports students of several historically marginalized and intersecting identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and national origin). Therefore, this dissertation study aimed to explore the work experiences of Administrators of Color who serve as the director of a multicultural center that supports students of several intersecting marginalized identities.

The proposed research question was explored utilizing qualitative research methods. Qualitative research aims to understand how people interpret their experiences, how they

construct their world, and what meanings they attribute to their experiences in a context-specific

setting. Qualitative data can be collected via interviews, focus groups, and observations (Denzin

& Lincoln, 2011; Merriam, 2009). Of the various approaches of qualitative research, I situated

this research study in phenomenology methods. Further, I framed the research study utilizing

philosopher Martin Heidegger hermeneutic framework. Within the remainder of this chapter, I

provide an overview of the research design, the rationale for selecting this approach followed by

an overview of the chosen methodology. I then discuss my stance as the researcher, my biases

toward the study, as well as my assumptions. Next, I provide an overview of the research design

inclusive of: 1) ethical considerations, 2) participant recruitment via recruitment flyers and

emails, 3) interview protocols, and 4) data analysis procedures. I conclude with a chapter

summary.

Research Design

Research conducted on the experiences of multicultural center directors of color within

higher education settings is scarce. Of the existing research presented in Chapter 2, scholars paid

particular attention to the negative experiences Students of Color faced on college campuses

(Biondi, 2012; Douglas et al., 2020; Gasman, 2007; Harper, 2020; Massey et al., 2003; Patton,

2010; Rogers, 2012), the evolution of BCCs in higher education (Benitez, 2010), the services

offered by BCCs and their staff (Benitez, 2010), the dismantling of BCCs, and the development

of centralized MSSs (Hefner, 2002; Princes, 1994).

What remains missing from these studies is an understanding of the lived experiences of

multicultural center directors of color who support college students of several marginalized

identities (e.g., race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, and

national origin). As explained in the previous chapter, a multicultural center is responsible for

supporting students from several marginalized identities. Further, as highlighted in Stewart and

Bridges (2011) quantitative study, the job duties assigned to a centralized multicultural center is

expansive. However, the impact on multicultural staff, specifically the director, is unknown.

Thus, research is needed to understand the work experiences of multicultural directors situated

within organizational structures embedded in White privilege, the associated challenges they

face, what institutional support looks like, and the personal and professional consequences of the

role. In order to answer the research question, qualitative methods were best. In the section to

follow, I provide an overview of the methodology that I used to conduct this study.

Phenomenological Research

Qualitative research is used by the counseling field as a methodology to translate the

human experience into words (Duffy & Chenail, 2008; Merriam, 2009). The aim of qualitative

research is to generate new knowledge regarding the experiences of a segment of the population.

Qualitative research encompasses several approaches, including the selected approach for this

proposed study: phenomenological. Phenomenological methods are used by researchers who are

interested in understanding the lived experiences of people's everyday lives (Merriam, 2009).

Phenomenological research typically includes key features within the research design, including

an exploration of a phenomenon with a group of participants via interviews, and data analysis

that includes thick rich descriptions that capture the participants' lived experiences.

Phenomenology requires in-depth interviews with participants to get a full picture of their

experience. The content shared in the interviews provides a rich and very detailed description of

the human experience, also known as the essence of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009; Peoples,

2021; Wertz, 2005).

Hermeneutic Phenomenology

There are two main frameworks used by phenomenological researchers: Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, and Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology (Peoples, 2021). Husserl is considered the founder of phenomenological research, and Heidegger was a student of Husserl's (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peoples, 2021). From these two philosophers, I chose Heidegger's hermeneutic framework for this dissertation study. In 1927, Heidegger published *Being and Time,* which explored the question, "what does it mean to be?" (Heidegger, 1927/2011). Heidegger believed that a researchers' experiences with the phenomenon could not be epochéd or magically bottled and stored away, similar to what Husserl's considers as bracketing. Instead, Heidegger, "believed that there was no way we could bracket our experiences because we are always in the world within the circumstances of existence" (Peoples, 2021, p. 32). He argued that the human being and the subject were inseparable and that the human being is not simply a spectator of events. Heidegger coined the term *dasein,* which is defined as "being there" (Peoples, 2021).

Hermeneutic phenomenology scholars utilize an approach known as the hermeneutic circle. As researchers gain knowledge and insight into a phenomenon, their preconceived judgments are either challenged or confirmed, and as a result, the scholar develops a new understanding of the phenomenon. This revision of the researchers' original interpretation of the phenomena is constantly revised through the data that is collected (Peoples, 2021). Heidegger argued that unlike approaches used in transcendental phenomenology, where researchers bracket and suspend their judgments about the phenomenon, the hermeneutic circle approach requires researchers to discuss their biases and assumptions prior to data collection (Peoples, 2021). In addition, journaling throughout the study allows the researcher to have a renewed interpretation

of the phenomenon from the participants lens (Pillow, 2003). In the section to follow, I share my

researcher stance which includes my biases and assumptions as it relates to the research study.

Researcher Stance

In qualitative research, scholars serve as the data collection instrument, meaning they

collect data and have interpretive authority over participant stories (McLeod, 2015; O'Sullivan,

2015). Because of the power dynamics throughout the research process, scholars must engage in

self-reflection activities to ensure that there is no harm enacted on their participants (Hall &

Callery, 2001). Reflective activities allow the researcher to gain a heightened sense of their

values and biases that may impact data collection and the interpretation process. Furthermore,

Suzuki et al. (2007) stated that researchers must be aware and cognizant of their multiple

identities, positions of power, world views, political values, as well as biases. These factors

impact data collection, as well as data analysis. Therefore, the intentional act of reflexivity is

required in qualitative research to ensure that the researcher remains as the narrator and the

participants' stories remain true to their experiences (Elliott, 2005). The act of self-reflection

prior to data collection reassures participants that the researcher can be trusted to represent their

lived experiences (O'Sullivan, 2015).

Self-reflexivity is critical when the researcher shares similarities with their participants,

in addition to similar lived experiences regarding the topic being studied. Consequently, self-

reflexivity is also true when the researcher is culturally different from their participants (i.e.,

race, gender, educational attainment). In these instances when the researcher shares similarities

and differences, the researcher is both an insider and an outsider, which influences the data

collection and analysis process (O'Sullivan, 2015; Suzuki et al., 2007). Villenas (1996)

suggested that unless researchers engage in self-reflection, they have the potential to "other"

their participants. She defines "othering" as objectifying participants who are not White Western Eurocentric, and as such, their experiences are treated as inferior. Villenas (1996) stated, "we are also colonizers when we fail to question our own identities and privileged positions, and in the ways our writings perpetuate othering" (p. 713). Le Gallais (2008) suggested that novice researchers should engage in reflection activities to deepen their understanding of their insider and outsider position. Thus, in the section to follow, I engage in reflexivity and bring forth my world view experiences and how they impact my assumptions of the study.

My Positionality

I am a first-generation college graduate and doctoral candidate who self-identifies as a Puerto Rican female. I was raised in a working-class home in a part of New York City known as El Barrio. At the time, El Barrio was predominantly Black and Puerto Rican and included working-class families living in overcrowded public housing known as the "projects." I grew up during the 1980s and witnessed disparities in arrests and the sentencing of People of Color.

When it was time to apply to college, my high school counselor suggested I identify colleges that had the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), a state-funded program for students from low-income backgrounds who have the academic potential to succeed in higher education. I was accepted to the State University of New York at Plattsburgh (SUNY) through the EOP program. SUNY Plattsburgh is located in northern New York and near the Quebec border. At the time of my enrollment, SUNY Plattsburgh was a Predominately White Institution (PWI), and I experienced otherness, isolation, homesickness, and imposter syndrome. I was part of the 2% of Students of Color at the institution and immediately sought refuge in friends and university administrators who shared similar identities. I sought guidance and support from the sole administrator of color who worked in the Admissions Office. His role at the institution was

to recruit Students of Color, and I ultimately volunteered to serve as a multicultural student ambassador that mentored incoming freshman Students of Color. This role served as the pathway to additional leadership opportunities across the institution. My engagement on campus led me to pursue a career in Student Affairs.

My first professional experience in higher education was in 2008 as an Assistant Director for a small Catholic college located outside of New York City (NYC). My main responsibilities included advocating and supporting Students of Color. I served in that role for three years. For the eight years to follow, I pursued similar roles at institutions of higher education that included advocacy for racial and ethnic underrepresented college students. I began my career wide-eyed and eager to address the systemic racism that impacted the success and persistence of Students of Color; yet, as the years progressed, I became burnt out by the late nights and weekend commitments, the demand to resolve racialized student turmoil, as well as supporting faculty as they encountered issues related to race. In addition, I was underfunded, understaffed, and underpaid. Ultimately in 2016, I chose to take a step back from working in multicultural affairs, and pursued a career in academic affairs. Unlike my previous experiences in multicultural centers, my experience in academic affairs did not take a toll on my health and wellness as a result of navigating racist encounters. For example, I was not tasked as the token leader on campus with the responsibility to develop strategies to all support Students of Color. I did not experience the pressure of being the point person for all concerns related to race and inequity. Instead, in my role within academic affairs, I was provided ample funding, staffing as well as given the opportunity to contribute to the university in different ways.

My positionality impacted the ways in which I crafted the research study such as the chosen theoretical frameworks, the research question, and the interview protocols. As a Person of

Color who experienced racism within institutions of higher education, my lens included

acknowledging that systemic oppression exists at PWIs. In addition to my lens, I shared

similarities with my participants which may have contributed to their comfort in disclosing their

stories throughout the data collection process. However, some of my identities were different

from the participants (e.g., race, age, educational attainment), and some of these identities

resulted in me having privilege over some participants. As hermeneutic phenomenology scholars

assert, throughout the data collection and analysis process, I did not claim objectivity. I engaged

in journaling, consulting with critical friends, and challenging my biases and blind spots with my

dissertation chair.

My Assumptions

Heidegger's (1982) phenomenological framework requires the researcher to indicate their

assumptions toward the phenomenon. Therefore, prior to data being collected, I had two

assumptions. First, I assumed that most People of Color who work in multicultural centers faced

institutional barriers such as tokenism and feeling the pressure to address all issues around

diversity and inclusion. And as a result, these barriers prevented administrators from engaging in

critical work that positively impacted campus climate. I also assumed that multicultural center

directors experienced burnout as a result of being responsible for resolving campus racism.

Data Collection

Creswell and Poth (2018) defined qualitative data collection as, "a series of interrelated

activities aimed at gathering information to answer emerging research questions" (p. 148). These

activities included (a) attending to ethical considerations, (b) locating a site or participants for the

study, (c) engaging in purposeful sampling, (d) gaining access and building rapport with

participants, (e) collecting and securing data, and (f) analyzing data to provide a robust account

of participants experiences. In the section to follow, I explain how I collected data for this study.

Ethical Considerations

This research study was submitted and reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB)

at Montclair State University (MSU). The purpose of the IRB at MSU is to ensure that the

research study is academically sound and that participants are not placed at risk (Montclair State

University, 2021). My first step included requesting a Cayuse IRB account which served as the

portal to which the research study was submitted and reviewed. I then completed CITI Training

which covered topics such as privacy risks, ethical principles, and confidentiality procedures.

Once CITI training was completed, I submitted the research application through the Cayuse IRB

portal. The application included an overview of the research methodology, recruitment flyer,

interview protocols, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, as well as copies of the

consent form. The application was reviewed and approved by my dissertation chair along with

two IRB compliance officers (see Appendix A).

Recruitment

Once I received IRB approval, I distributed my recruitment flyer via social media

platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn targeting specific support groups for higher

education Administrators of Color, as well as diversity administrators within higher education

(e.g., Facebook groups BLKSAP Black Student Affairs Professionals, Latinx in Student Affairs,

and ACPA Coalition for Multicultural Affairs). I emailed my higher education colleagues and

asked them to share my flyer within their networks (see Appendix B). Furthermore, I searched

for multicultural center directors on Google. I then created a spreadsheet consisting of their email

addresses and location. The final list generated from my Google search resulted in 45

multicultural center directors. I sent them a personal email inviting them to consider participating

in the study.

Criteria for Participation

The purpose of the research study was to understand the lived experiences of

multicultural center directors of color. Therefore, criteria for participation included: (a) self-

identifying as a member of a racial and ethnic minority group, (b) serving as the supervisor of a

multicultural center that supports students of several marginalized identities (e.g., race, gender,

sexual orientation, socioeconomic status), (c) having at least 5 years of work experience in

higher education, and (d) being able to complete interviews either virtually or in-person. All

participants were screened using a Google form to ensure that they met the criteria for

participation (see Appendix C).

Participant Consent

Participants who met the criteria to be included in the study were provided with a consent

form via email (see Appendix D). The consent form included the title, the assigned IRB number,

and an overview of the purpose of the study. In addition, the consent form provided participants

with an overview of the data collection process. The consent form also listed the risks (e.g.,

feelings associated with retelling instances of racism), as well as the benefits of participating in

the study (e.g., finding comfort in the shared experiences with other multicultural center directors

of color). Further, the consent form included the phone numbers and email addresses of the

primary investigator, faculty sponsor, and the IRB Chair. The consent form was re-introduced

prior to the start of the first interview. I utilized the first 15 minutes of the first interview to read

the consent form out loud and emphasize the time commitment, the types of questions that would

be asked, and reminded participants that they could withdraw from the study at any point. I also

reminded participants that if they felt uncomfortable, they could stop the interview. Due to

interviews being conducted virtually, many participants were unable to sign a hard copy

document. Therefore, consent was collected via a Google survey (see Appendix E).

Participant Saturation

The total number of participants required for a qualitative research study varies among

scholars. For example, some scholars have a definitive number they recommend. Morse (1994)

recommended at least six participants, whereas Creswell (1998) suggested five to 25 participants.

However, other scholars do not place a numerical value on participation. Merriam (2009) argued

that a uniform sample size for qualitative research is unlikely because it depends on the proposed

research question, and the content provided by the participants. Similarly, Lincoln and Guba

(1985) recommended sampling until redundancy and saturation are achieved. Saturation is

defined as when the researcher sees repetition throughout the data collection process and can

conclude that no other new information is added to the research study (Creswell & Poth, 2018;

Merriam, 2009). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, I decided to interview participants until

saturation occurred. After my 16th interview, I determined that no new information was gained

as it related to the phenomenon.

Participant Overview

As a result of the topic of the research study, there was an overwhelming outpour of

multicultural center directors who were interested to participate in the study. After utilizing

screening procedures, as well as assessing the demographic make-up of the participant pool, 16

multicultural center directors and deans completed the study. The majority of the participants

served as directors. However, four participants had dual titles (e.g., director & assistant dean,

director & associate dean); therefore, for the remainder of this study, I will refer to all participants as directors.

Political Landscape in Florida During Data Collection

It should be noted that during data collection, participants from Florida were experiencing the ramifications of Republican Governor Ron DeSantis' decisions intended to eliminate funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion at Florida's public colleges, including multicultural centers (The Florida Senate, 2023). Participants shared that they felt their positions were being threatened by House Bill 999 (H.B. 999), the Public Postsecondary Educational Institutions. As a result, these participants were navigating their roles during a heightened political climate and most of their conversations with me were situated within the context of the external political factors occurring in their state. This context matters because multicultural center directors shared that they were concerned about their future employment. Therefore, to protect Florida participants from being exposed and identified, I will present participants collectively.

Participant Identities

The 16 participants identified themselves as African American/Black, Caribbean/American, Caribbean/Black, Chinese, European White, Latinx/a/o, Chicano, Kuwaiti, Mexican, Puerto Rican, and American White. Four participants identified as bi-racial, and one identified as multiracial. Participants were located across 12 states: Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin. Nine participants identified as women; eight identified as men; and six identified as parents. All participants had a master's degree, and three had doctoral degrees. Participants obtained degrees in various disciplines such as business, counseling, elementary education,

higher education administration, sports administration, and social work. Three participants worked at their alma mater. The number of years worked in higher education varied among participants; with one participant having 5 years of experience and another having 22 years of experience. The average experience worked in higher education was 12 years.

Participant Job Descriptions

Of the 16 participants, 15 reported to either the division of student affairs/student life or enrollment management. One participant reported to a senior diversity officer. All 16 participants were responsible for managing a multicultural center that provided services to historically ethnically marginalized students (e.g., Black, African American, Latinx/a/o, Asian Pacific Islander, Caribbean, International Students, Middle Eastern Students, Native American and Indigenous Students). Some directors were responsible to support additional marginalized identities related to gender, religion, sexual orientation, social class, and ability. For some participants, they had additional identity centers under their purview (e.g., Undocumented Student Services, The Women's Center, Faith & Spirituality, the LGBTQ+ Center, First-Generation Center, Disability Services, Neurodiversity Services). All 16 participants were responsible for providing culturally relevant programs during heritage and identity months (e.g., Black History Month). In addition to executing cultural celebrations, many of the directors were responsible to facilitate campus-wide diversity training for students, faculty, and staff; advising multicultural clubs and organizations; offering academic advising and career counseling; serving on various committees across campus; supporting admissions with recruitment initiatives, and coordinating alternative spring break trips that focused on community service. Finally, some participants were also responsible for campus wide bias-incident reporting and serving as the Title IX officer for athletics.

How Participants Got Into Multicultural Affairs

Pursuing a career in multicultural affairs came naturally to several of the participants. Many of them reported that they served as undergraduate student-leaders of an ethnic-identity-based student organization on their campus (e.g., Mexican Student Association, Caribbean Student Association, Latino Fraternity). As a result of their undergraduate leadership experiences, many of the participants were tapped on the shoulder by a university administrator, often a Dean of Students, who encouraged them to pursue a degree in Higher Education/Student Affairs. Participants continued their campus involvement and worked as a Graduate Assistant within Student Affairs. Their role often included supporting a multicultural center, advising Student of Color organizations, or assisting with events and programs. Although the majority of participants pursued this traditional path, some did not. For example, prior to entering multicultural affairs, some participants worked in fundraising, admissions, and athletics. All participants reported that they sought positions in multicultural centers because they felt strongly about advocating for the needs of historically underrepresented students.

Carnegie Classification

I used Carnegie Classification to describe the participants' institutional size and classification. I also chose to use Carnegie Classification to provide another layer of confidentiality as opposed to providing accurate enrollment for each participant's institution. In addition to confidentiality, Carnegie Classification is important because the enrollment of students is related to operational finances, structure, and resources (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, n.d.). The Carnegie Classification categories associated with participants are defined as followed: (a) small colleges/universities have an enrollment of 500–1,999; (b) medium colleges/universities have an enrollment of 2,000–4,999; (c) large

colleges/universities have an enrollment of 5,000–9,999; and (d) very large colleges/universities

have an enrollment of 10,000 or more. In addition to institutional size, the classification varied

among participants. That is, 14 participants worked at Predominately White Institution, two

participants worked at a Hispanic Serving Institution, and four participants worked at a Religious

Affiliated Institution. Two of the 16 participants worked at R1 High Research Activity

Institutions.

See Table 1 for participant information.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym Name	Ethnicity (as described by the participant)	Gender	Carnegie Classification Institution Size
Alejandro	Latino/Chicano	Male	Very Large
Amelia Bedelia	Black	Female	Small
August	Caribbean (Trinidad & Tobago)	Male	Medium
Charlie	Latinx/Mexican	Male	Very Large
Carmen	Mexican/Chicana, Chinese, & European White	Female	Small
Craig	Black & White	Male	Small
Dr. J	Black	Male	Very Large
Gloria	Mexican & Kuwaiti	Female	Very Large
JaRon	Black	Male	Small
Maya	Black/African American	Female	Very Large
Mike	Black	Male	Medium
Monarch	Black	Female	Very Large
Nilsa Rivera	Puerto Rican	Female	Medium
Sam	Black & Mexican	Female	Very Large
Shein	Black/Caribbean (Grenada)	Female	Small
Violeta	Mexican & Puerto Rican	Female	Medium

Data Collection

Data were collected via two interviews using specific guiding questions (see Appendix F). Sixteen participants completed the first interview, and 14 participants completed the second interview, which served as a member check. In total, I collected 20 hours of audio interview data.

I employed semi-structured interview techniques which is defined as the process of using both structured interview questions, as well as exploring additional topics if issues arise (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; McLeod, 2015, Merriam, 2009). This process allowed participants the opportunity to dig deeper when recounting their lived experiences. It also allowed me to ask follow up questions related to aspects of the phenomenon. Unlike structured interviews that require the researcher to stick to the script, semi-structured interviews allowed for conversation during the interview process (Rabionet, 2011).

The use of semi structured interviews aligned with the chosen phenomenological framework. That is, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology requires in-depth and rich descriptions which are captured in in-depth conversations. The first point of contact consisted of an audio recorded full interview, including questions pertaining to the phenomenon, followed by demographic questions. The length of the first interview ranged from 49 minutes to two hours. It should be noted that due to a technical error, one interview was not recorded. Therefore, immediately after that interview, I jotted down as much from memory, which gave me two pages of data. I also emailed the participant and asked them to review my notes and provide any information on what was missed. Once the first interview was completed, I sent participants a thank you email which included a resource guide with a listing of professional associations for higher education Administrators of Color, as well as culturally based mental health therapists (see Appendix G).

After the first interview was transcribed and coded, participants were contacted four weeks later to meet with me for a second interview to review the themes that emerged from their interview. Peoples (2021) explained that contacting participants twice, instead of once, allows for researchers to provide rich data and thick descriptions of the participants' lived experiences.

Therefore, to prepare for the second interview, I provided participants with an executive summary of their interview along with the themes that emerged from the data. The length of the second audio recorded interview ranged from 30 minutes to an hour. Participants were presented with three questions in the second interview. The questions were: 1) is there anything that you would like to expand on in more depth? 2) are there any questions that were not answered fully? and, 3) is there anything that you would like to add to the study that is not captured? During this member check process, participants read each of my proposed themes and either confirmed that it captured their experience or provided an alternative perspective. For example, one participant thought that my use of the word "tension" should be rephrased as "balance." Once the second interview was completed and transcribed, I coded the data and added participant excerpts to my code book.

Interview Protocols

The interview protocols included questions related to the phenomenon as well as demographic questions (see Appendix F). Interviews were conducted virtually utilizing Zoom video software that is Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliant. An audio recorder was used to ensure that what participants shared was preserved (Merriam, 2009). In addition, I took handwritten notes to capture aspects of the phenomenon that stood out to me, content that challenged my biases, and observations such as body language and tone of speech. As a layer of protection for the participants, none of the interviews were video recorded. Once the interview was completed, the recording was uploaded to Rev.com which is a secure website that is encrypted and password protected. The software generated a transcript, which was downloaded to my password protected Google email account. All recordings were deleted from Rev.com.

An inherent part of the interview process is the power dynamic between researcher and participant. Critical race theorists acknowledge that the researcher has control over the interview process. Therefore, I accounted for how these dynamics of power showed up and impacted the data collection process. I began all interviews with an introduction, overview of the purpose of the research study, and an explanation that participants may leave the study at any time. I then explained the methods of collecting data such as note-taking and audio recording. I reaffirmed with the participants that their name and location of employment will not be exposed. During the interview process, I aimed to remain nonjudgmental, maintained neutral body language, and remained respectful (Merriam, 2009).

Data Analysis

Data analysis is a series of methodological steps that involve preparing and organizing data, reading the data, reducing the data into codes or themes, interpreting the data, and presenting it through discussion (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The phases of phenomenological research consist of four systematic steps for data analysis (Wertz, 2005). These steps are, "1) reading for a sense of the whole; 2) differentiating the description into meaning units; 3) reflecting on the psychological significance of each meaning unit; and 4) clarifying the psychological structure(s) of the phenomenon" (p. 131). The first step, reading for a sense of the whole, requires the researcher to listen authentically without judgment or bias. According to Wertz (2005), the researcher is not listening with an agenda in mind. The second step, discriminating meaning units, requires the researcher to begin to reflect on each participant's experiences and identify aspects of the lived experiences that can be used to analyze the presented research problem. The third step, psychological analysis, requires the researcher to make meaning of the phenomenon and thematizing experiences and meanings shared by the

participants. The fourth step, structural understanding and description involved thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation.

All participant interviews were transcribed by a professional company. Each transcription was saved by the participant's pseudonym name in a password-protected email account. Once the transcription was received, I began to complete data analysis by hand using steps suggested by Peoples (2020) and Wertz (2005). I first read the entire transcription to discern the participants' complete story. Next, I removed any unnecessary verbiage from the transcript (e.g., um, well, you know). Then, utilizing CRT and TRT as my theoretical framework, I jotted down codes along the margins of each transcript immediately after the interview was completed. I created a Google excel spreadsheet that included all of the codes from participant transcripts. I then aligned codes with specific quotes within the interview for each participant. I continued this process for all interviews. Once I coded 16 interviews, I listened to the audio recordings, and did a second round of coding. This allowed me to condense codes or add additional codes that captured the essence of the participants' stories. As a result of two rounds of coding of the first interview, I ended up with 68 codes. I then began to condense codes and categorize codes and provide descriptive text that captured the essence of the participants' experiences. For example, the following codes (e.g., cannot vote, limited funding, cannot impact policy) were categorized and labeled "Multicultural Center Directors Experience Institutional Roadblocks." I continued this process and developed a first draft of the code book for my dissertation chair. The code book included the title of the proposed theme, the definition of the theme, along with the titles and definitions of associated subthemes. Coding continued through to member checks. At the completion of member checking, I engaged in a third round of coding similar to the first round of interviews.

Researcher Reflectivity

The use of reflectivity activities emerged in the fields of anthropology and education as a methodological tool in the 1970s (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Mayes, 2001; Mortari, 2015). The use of reflexivity in research as a methodological tool requires the researcher to examine how they influenced the research process (Smith & Luke, 2021). In other words, reflexivity is, "the constant awareness, assessment, and reassessment by the researcher of the researcher's own contribution / influence / shaping of inter-subjective research and the consequent research findings" (Patnaik, 2013, p. 100). Gilgun (2008) drew attention to the importance of reflexivity:

> It is essential for researchers to examine and take into account the multiple influences they have on the research processes and how research processes affect them, and the persons and situations they research (p. 184).

Throughout data collection and analysis, I engaged in three reflective activities: field and reflective notes, the use of critical friends, and inviting participants to provide feedback. The aforementioned methods will be described in the section to follow.

Field and Reflective Notes

Audio recordings and handwritten notes are part of the data collection process. In addition, observation and field notes played a critical role in the data collection of this research study. Observation is the process of what the researcher sees, hears, or feels during the data collection process (Merriam, 2009). Thus, my field notes included things such as verbal descriptions of the setting, direct quotations, and observations, and my initial reaction to participants' stories. The use of field notes contributed to the rich in-depth description that is used by phenomenological researchers. In addition to what I observed during the interview process, I documented my own feelings and thoughts in a journal that was in a password

protected Google account. This journal included my initial reaction to the stories shared, newfound knowledge, confirmed knowledge, as well as any biases that may get in the way of my interpretations of the data. After the first round of interviews, I had a total of 16 field and reflective notes.

Critical Friends

In 1993, Costa and Kallick were two of the first authors to introduce the role of a critical friend as a tool to engage in reflexivity. These scholars defined a critical friend as,

> a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers a critique of a person's work as a friend. A critical friend takes the time to fully understand the context of the work presented and the outcomes that the person or group is working toward. The friend is an advocate for the success of the work. (Costa & Kallick, p. 50)

I engaged in several steps when choosing critical friends for this dissertation study. First, I selected three critical friends who were interdisciplinary in nature coming from various fields such as counseling and higher education. These critical friends were familiar with the content, have leadership experiences in their organizations, and have an understanding of racialized work environments. These critical friends provided me feedback that elevated the work, raised questions and critiques, monitored my progress, questioned my interpretations of the findings, and offered additional interpretations (Costa & Kallick, 1993). To capture diverse perspectives, I ensured that there was diversity across identities (e.g., race, gender, and age). Immediately after each interview, I engaged in processing the interview out loud with a critical friend. At the conclusion of the conversation, I added content to my field notes.

Critical friends were also utilized after emotionally triggering interviews. On some occasions, I left some interviews feeling emotionally drained and discouraged. During these moments, I called a critical friend who specialized in counseling and talked through my feelings. I also journaled and identified how my feelings may impact the coding process. Because I was aware that I was impacted by their stories, I was intentional to seek out critical friends when interpreting aspects of these participants' interviews.

Member Checks

Member checking is defined as the process where the researcher solicits feedback from their participants regarding the researcher's analysis of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checking aligns with the chosen methodology of this study as participants are invited to assist with the co-construction of knowledge related to the phenomenon. In order to ensure the validity and accuracy of the participants' experiences, I provided participants with a list of emerging themes. I then scheduled a second interview, and the participant and I walked and talked through each of the emerging themes. At the conclusion of the second interviews, I was able to highlight which of the themes captured the essence of the majority of the participants.

Chapter Summary

Phenomenology is intended to understand the experiences of a certain phenomenon that may be taken for granted (Wertz, 2005). Of the two philosophies to phenomenology, I chose Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. I recruited participants from social media networks, list serves, and email lists on university websites. I interviewed 16 participants who served as multicultural center directors. Data for this study was collected via two semi-structured interviews that were audio recorded. Throughout the data collection process, I engaged in hermeneutic circles activities to identify how my experiences with the phenomenon interfered

with data collection and analysis. Furthermore, I engage in reflectivity activities to ensure

research reliability and validity. Throughout the entire data collection process, I adhered to IRB

ethical standards to ensure that no harm was done to participants.

Chapter 4: Results

In the previous chapter, I presented the methodology used to address the research question for this dissertation study: What are the lived experiences of multicultural center directors of color? I also provided an overview of data collection, data analysis, and participant demographics. In this chapter, I provide the findings from the interviews conducted with the 16 participants in this study.

Overview

After three rounds of coding, I constructed five themes that captured the essence of the participants' experiences. They are: 1) Directors Face Organizational Roadblocks; 2) Colleagues Relinquish Responsibility; 3) Directors Feel Compelled to Protect Students and Staff; 4) Sexism and Racism Impact Women of Color's Experiences, and 5) Directors Pay a Physical Toll. Each theme has several sub-themes and they will be discussed in each section below. Exemplary quotes will be shared to illustrate themes and subthemes.

Research Participants

An in-depth presentation of the 16 participants was provided in Chapter 3. However, to provide context while the reader is reviewing the findings in this chapter, Table 2 summarizes participant demographics. As stated in Chapter 3, participants chose their pseudonym name and how they wanted their ethnicity listed. Participants were located across 12 states: Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin. There was diversity among participants' work locations. In particular, some participants worked at small colleges and others worked at large R1 research institutions.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym Name	Ethnicity (as described by the participant)	Gender	Carnegie Classification Institution Size
Alejandro	Latino/Chicano	Male	Very Large
Amelia Bedelia	Black	Female	Small
August	Caribbean (Trinidad & Tobago)	Male	Medium
Charlie	Latinx/Mexican	Male	Very Large
Carmen	Mexican/Chicana, Chinese, & European White	Female	Small
Craig	Black & White	Male	Small
Dr. J	Black	Male	Very Large
Gloria	Mexican & Kuwaiti	Female	Very Large
JaRon	Black	Male	Small
Maya	Black/African American	Female	Very Large
Mike	Black	Male	Medium
Monarch	Black	Female	Very Large
Nilsa Rivera	Puerto Rican	Female	Medium
Sam	Black & Mexican	Female	Very Large
Shein	Black/Caribbean (Grenada)	Female	Small
Violeta	Mexican & Puerto Rican	Female	Medium

Findings

In this section of the chapter, I present the five themes and sub-themes of the study. I begin with theme number one.

Theme 1: Directors Face Organizational Roadblocks

A majority of the participants in the study shared that organizational roadblocks got in the way of their work in advocating for the needs of marginalized students. In particular, they were not provided funding, voting power, or access to consult with senior leaders on issues that impacted their roles. These roadblocks were categorized into five subthemes. They are: 1) Directors Experience Institutional Barriers and Challenges, 2) Directors Lack Institutional Agency, 3) Directors Expected to Engage in Performative Institutional Programming, 4) Directors Do Not Have Adequate Funding, and 5) Senior Leaders Make Harmful Decisions About Cultural Centers.

Directors Experience Institutional Barriers and Challenges

Institutions of higher education hire directors of multicultural centers to support two distinctly different populations with different needs: marginalized students and senior administrators. Marginalized students rely on multicultural centers and their staff to advocate with and/or for them. Senior leaders expect multicultural centers to support larger institutional goals that are often embedded within White/Eurocentric norms. As a result of the tension of serving two opposing groups, many participants acknowledged that they were aware of the ramifications (e.g., being reprimanded) when they publicly supported student advocacy (e.g., protests) that critiqued institutional inequities (e.g., lack of faculty of color in classrooms). Other participants embraced the duality of their roles. As an illustration of this dynamic, Monarch's statement below captures the essence of this sub-theme. She said,

> Most of the goals that we set for DEI [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion] are good for the
>
> institution, as they should be. But my work cannot just serve the institution because that's
>
> not why my work exists. My work must respond to the racial trauma that impacts our

students, and sometimes that response does not serve the institution. Sometimes it calls

the institution out. And so, I work in and against my institution. I'm also very clear that

part of my job, as an advocate and as an advisor for students, is helping them to speak

truth to power and to disrupt systematic racism in ways that do not affirm my higher-ups.

I am often playing the mediator between those opposing ideas and groups. And then

sometimes I am also, how do you say this, a co-conspirator, right?

Although participants are hired to support the most marginalized, doing so felt as if they

were conspiring against the institution. Participants explained that their students were engaged in

student protests, and some participants struggled with how much they could support the students.

Amelia Bedelia mentioned she too felt like she was a co-conspirator, which caused uneasiness.

She explained to her students, "I can't protest with you, but I can tell you how to organize, cuz I

need a job and I'm not a tenured faculty member." Amelia Bedelia's comment highlights the

lack of job security multicultural center directors are afforded. Gloria also struggled with student

protests. In fact, when her students protested on campus because their list of demands were not

met, she was very hesitant to reach out to students. She felt by doing so, she was putting her job

in jeopardy. She noted,

> I would love to advise [students on organizing protests], but I feel like I can't reach out to
>
> them because I'm kind of caught in that difficult position where obviously I get paid by
>
> this institution, and so I can't exactly organize against them [the institution] … I think
>
> about that all the time. How can I help students without harming myself?

While both Amelia Bedelia and Gloria were hesitant to publicly engage, Nilsa was not. In fact,

she attends student rallies and marches with students on campus. However, she shared that one

of those rallies was recorded. In the days to follow, the recording was shared with the President, and she was asked to meet with members of the cabinet to discuss her role at the student events.

In addition to student protests, multicultural center directors advocated on behalf of their students through other forums such as emails, meetings, and conversations with their supervisor. Some participants acknowledged that when they called-out the institution and brought attention to issues, it resulted in negative ramifications. For example, Sam was reprimanded by senior leaders after she gave honest feedback about inequitable policies and procedures. She mentioned,

> I see a large part of my job and responsibility is to openly critique systems. But there are
>
> people invested in those systems and the status quo. There are also people who are afraid
>
> of change and hold onto what they know, even if it's not in their or the students' best
>
> interest. Openly critiquing the institution places me at risk. In openly critiquing,
>
> improving, and dismantling systems that don't work well, you encounter pushback.
>
> Pushback can manifest in different ways. I've been yelled at. I've been "talked to" by
>
> supervisors. I've had my words misconstrued and used against me.

Directors Lack Institutional Agency

Key decisions are made by university stakeholders with power. Power is defined as having the ability to vote in meetings, make decisions on curricular changes, and obtain adequate finances. Those in power are often close in proximity to the President and/or Chancellor. Of the sixteen participants, only one person had a direct reporting line to the university President. The remaining 15 participants were: a) one reporting line away from the President ($n=1$), b) two reporting lines away from the President ($n=8$), c) three reporting lines away from the President ($n=5$), and d) four reporting lines away from the President ($n=2$). As a result, some participants explained they did not have a seat at the table with senior leaders (e.g., presidents, provosts,

deans, department chairs, vice presidents, etc.), and others were invited to meetings, but were not allowed to vote. August, who has over 22 years of experience working in multicultural affairs, argued directors of multicultural centers are not included in important discussions where decisions are made. He argued multicultural center staff are not seen as integral leaders because faculty do not value and respect the co-curricular programming offered by diversity centers. He stated,

> I'm not part of those discussions. And so why not though? If we're going to talk about equity, and we're going to talk about it from a micro-place with our students, why are we not talking about it in a macro-sense? And who better to have a conversation than me? So that's the kind of discussion that should be happening, but that scope is not normally associated with this position, which is why people don't want to take this position.

> Unlike August, Mike was invited to discussions with senior leaders; however, he was not allowed to vote. Mike attributed his presence in these meetings to his previous career which provided him access to people in power. When he shifted over to work in multicultural affairs, he was able to retain some of the relationships he had previously fostered. These relationships made him enough of an asset to be there, but not enough of an asset to speak. Mike stated,

> My experience is that I'm at every table so folks can check a box. You got the DEI guy at the table, wonderful. But I'm also part of six committees and three of 'em, I don't have voting power. I'm considered ad-hoc … I don't have the autonomy or the agency around policies. So, I have to almost be middle-management and a reporter to the street, so to speak. So, I'm hearing what's going on, I have to send it up to the cloud, and whatever comes back down from the cloud, we have to manipulate it. We have to mold it. And so 's the problem, and that's what keeps me up at night. Not having the autonomy to address it,

or not being able to tap into the solution. And so sometimes taking a step back to wait for the levees to break. And the scary part is that when the levees break, they [senior administrators] are calling me. So, why wasn't I involved before the levees break?

Directors Expected to Engage in Performative Institutional Programming

Many of the participants acknowledged that most institutions of higher education hire multicultural center directors to engage in surface-level work, or as August explained, "they [senior leaders] just want someone to do a retreat, do a workshop, and feed people cultural food." He argued the scope of the influence is limited to programmatic events and celebrations. Almost all of the participants shared their concern with the performative nature of multicultural affairs and many participants yearned to do more than host programs. However, participants explained their institutions assumed diversity programming was limited to heritage months (e.g., Latinx Heritage Month). Alejandro has 20 years of experience working in higher education. When he arrived at his institution, he had a candid conversation with his supervisor. He said,

And it's almost like I had to ask permission to say, 'Hey, am I a Band-Aid or can I do things?' Because if I'm a Band-Aid then I will keep the ship afloat. We will be copacetic and any signature programs you want us to do, we will do. If I can make decisions, I want to see some things, or I wanna challenge folk, kind of stuff.

Similar to Alejandro, Violeta shared that as an administrator with 19 years of experience, she strongly desires to get away from diversity event programming and focus on big-picture diversity initiatives, but she is expected to be an event programmer. She explained that she is confined to ordering food, booking speakers, hosting cultural month programming, and conducting trainings. She said,

I enjoy programming, but I would love to get away from being a programmer. I am

always dealing with all this other stuff. But then I still have to come up with

programming, which is fine, I can do that. I can do it with my eyes closed 'cause I've

been doing it for forever. But I would love to get away from just being the programmer.

The person who orders the damn food and finds a speaker. I wanna be more strategic. I

wanna do more of the big picture stuff … but I really can't put my energy that I would

like to that because I still have to do programming. I still have to do these trainings, I still

have to do this, I still have to do that. And so, I wish that I could do less of that and more

bigger picture stuff.

Many participants struggled with being perceived as event programmers, and some of them

pushed back, including Carmen. She said,

And I just remember thinking, how do we decenter Whiteness from this work? How do

we not have it? The way that people can characterize this work is food, fun, and

festivities. We know it's more than that. We know it can be highly educational and

immersive and affirming to certain students. Validating to their experiences and their

lives and things like that. But how do we go beyond that when the culture at a lot of our

schools really seeks to perpetuate that … I do think that there's a culture that would like

to keep us in our place … when we have programs, they look a certain way and are

performative too. And I'm not doing it. So how are we moving away from that and

resisting not the temptation, but resisting the expectation that things look a certain way in

the work?

Directors Do Not Have Adequate Funding

All participants in the study were responsible to develop, manage, and implement programs that fostered an inclusive learning environment for Students of Color with intersecting identities (e.g., gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, religion, and national origin). The directors were expected to organize initiatives such as coordinating large-scale cultural programming, delivering campus-wide diversity training, serving on committees, collaborating with various offices to increase Student of Color enrollment, and assisting faculty in their classrooms. However, all participants reported they did not receive adequate financial support from their institutions. For example, JaRon is expected to be the diversity officer for faculty and staff. He stated,

> There are student organizations that have more money throughout the academic year ... than I have as an entire college department. I have less than $7,000 [annually] ... I wish people understood the cost it takes to do this work effectively … And what they give me is not sustainable, especially if you want me to be the diversity office for the entire college. You want me to be a full-blown diversity office with that budget? I can't do it. I was fortunate this year because our student government president is a Black man, and he worked hard with his senate to give us money. He asked me, 'can you spend it in a year?' I was like, 'I will spend it. Don't you worry.'

JaRon was expected to support students, faculty, and staff, yet was not provided with adequate financial resources. Participants would work above and beyond with the hopes it would be noticed and they would be better resourced (e.g., hire staff). However, some participants specifically stated they needed funding to hire staff. Monarch has a staff of seven and they are tasked to serve 26,000 - 75,000 students a semester. Violeta shared she's always been an office

of one and was in dire need of support staff to assist with the large workload of the multicultural center. She said,

> I think I knew for a long time that they [senior leaders] did not value the work being done
> … I had zero staff. At one point I had a graduate fellow, and then apparently it was too
> much, so they took it away. And so, it was legit just me; you know what, like it was me,
> just me, like doing everything. And then in your mind, you tell yourself that it's not about
> you or the money, it's about the students. And the students need you, but the institution
> keeps asking you to do more and more stuff without financial support.

As a result of the lack of financial support to hire staff, a majority of the participants relied on undergraduate and graduate student workers to assist with large-scale programming, leadership programs, office marketing, and campus-wide training. August explained currently, he is operating as a staff of one doing the work of both a director and an administrative assistant. He is responsible for purchases, copies, reimbursements, travel, office supplies, budgeting, and much more. August found this unfair because his institution brags about the existence of a multicultural center; however, the institution does not provide adequate funding. He said,

> The biggest thing that you hear in higher education is, 'show me where you spend your
> money, and I'll show you what you care about.' Right? So, we've been asking for a
> graduate assistant since I've gotten here, and other departments have gotten GA's and
> other places have gotten new staff members. And I've been begging and pleading. That's
> the other piece too, right there. The multicultural center is woefully underfunded. So,
> whereas it has a very prominent place in the zeitgeist, right? Senior leaders will brag, 'oh,
> we have a multicultural center, look at all the programs they do,' yada, yada, yada.

'Come here to this college because we're so diverse,' but they're not putting the money
into the programming even though I asked for it over and over again.

Senior Leaders Make Harmful Decisions About Cultural Centers

Twelve of the participants of the study spoke about the efforts they made to cultivate a welcoming environment for their students (e.g., purchasing culturally relevant decorations for the multicultural center, ordering comfortable furniture for students to study, having televisions so students can watch TV, and supplying snacks). However, the participants reported while they paid attention to the inside of the cultural center, senior administrators made harmful and negative decisions about the location, name, and infrastructure of the space. Of the 16 participants, six were unsatisfied with their location. For example, JaRon's center was previously located in the basement of a residence hall. Shein's center is hidden behind several corridors, and Mike's center is not listed in the campus directory. Furthermore, August noted his multicultural center is located in a building named after a politician of the city. August said,

The building that we are in is the [name removed] Building … he used to be the [major political figure] when stop-and-frisk was the order of the day. So, it is quite ironic to have a multicultural center focused on DEI in a space named for somebody who was notorious for victimizing and abusing Black and Brown communities.

Monarch shared that her multicultural center is located in a prime location and consists of a kitchen, a study space, a place for prayer, and more. The building is covered in glass. However, there is one room that is decorated with photos of the student protests that led to the creation of the center. This space is covered with wooden doors. Monarch said,

They created a room here … and there are all of these larger-than-life wallpapers from the student protests that led to the creation of this building. This is the only sort of

artwork in the building, but it is also the only room that has wooden doors. So, you can

physically close the room and you can't see it. Every other room in this building has glass

doors. So, there were some intentionality ... We can shut the doors when people are in

this building and they don't wanna be made uncomfortable. So, there's some of those

politics.

As a result of the location being tucked away, some participants explained they often spent days

without seeing their colleagues. The participants explained their colleagues did not visit the

multicultural center thus they did not have many interactions with professional staff beyond their

own staff.

As highlighted in this first theme, participants identified organizational roadblocks that

got in the way of them executing their goals. These roadblocks consisted of intentional decisions

made by senior leaders to minimize their ability to enhance systemic change. Roadblocks were

reported by all participants except one who indicated that their campus leaders provided

adequate support to their center.

Theme 2: Colleagues Relinquish Responsibility

As previously shared in Chapter 3, multicultural center directors are hired to support

underrepresented students on a college campus via programming and student support services.

They are trained in college student development theories; however, participants shared how their

institutions perceived them as diversity experts. Thus, senior leaders, faculty, and staff often

relinquished their responsibilities to address inequity. Many of the participants reported that their

colleagues in other departments (e.g., faculty and staff) absolved themselves of the

responsibilities of diversity and equity initiatives. Senior leaders also relied on multicultural

center directors to manage the aftermath of racial tragedies. Three sub-themes emerged within

this theme: 1) Senior Leaders Pass the Buck, 2) Burdened to Train Staff and Faculty, and 3) Tippy-Toed Support from White Colleagues, and I present the themes in this particular order to highlight the lack of support that began at the top of the organization through faculty and ultimately mid-level employees.

Senior Leaders Pass the Buck

During local and national unrest due to violence against Black and Brown men and women, senior leaders expected multicultural center directors to take the lead and ease racial tensions on campus. Many of the participants indicated senior leaders expected them to manage the aftermath of violence rooted in racism, sexism, and sexual orientation discrimination locally, nationally, as well as internationally. For example, immediately after the murder of two Black men, George Floyd and Tyre Nichols, ten participants in the study were expected to write public relations statements reaffirming their institutions' commitment to diversity, organize campus-wide healing spaces, and moderate emotionally charged discussions. For example, Craig explained neither his Vice Provost for Student Affairs nor the Chief Diversity Officer had a plan after Tyre Nichols, a 29-year-old Black man, was beaten and killed by Memphis police officers. He shared,

> I knew that the Tyre Nichols video was going to be released so I brought it up. I said, 'Here's kind of a menu of options. Here's some sample text. You know, you could send this to all students who are Black. You could send this to all Students of Color, you could send it to everybody. What do you want to do?' And I still got the deferment back to me … I'm not a senior administrator. I'm a director. I'm a step-down, so it's not my decision to make … you should make the decision. I constantly feel like I'm being asked by other people to make decisions for them and their departments, specifically because of my role

in the multicultural center, and as a Person of Color … There's a whole marketing

department.

Similarly, when to George Floyd was murdered, JaRon approached his supervisors to inquire

about the institution's plan. In turn, they asked him to take the lead and do all the work. He said,

> I was like, we need to do something [about George Floyd]. And they [senior leaders]
>
> were like, yeah, do it. And so, I'm organizing these virtual listening sessions. I'm getting
>
> marketing materials together, I'm pushing it out, I'm monitoring who signs up, I'm
>
> sending people the link, I'm putting together the presentation that's going to happen. And
>
> then when it actually happens, I gotta introduce this person and that person. I'm
>
> monitoring the chat saying who gets to speak next. I am doing all of that. And then I have
>
> to be strong for my students. I have to be like, okay, they need this space, they need to
>
> process what's going on.

Several participants argued they felt unsupported in doing this work because participants were

moderating conversations with attendees who were angry and felt disheartened about the

violence. For example, Nilsa also moderated sessions after the murder of George Floyd. She was

filled with exhaustion because similar to JaRon, she had to coordinate the entire thing. She

explained,

> George Floyd was a prime example … I won't speak for anybody else, but I was drained.
>
> I'm giving these talks at 8:00 p.m. at night, courageous conversations talk sessions where
>
> people are mad, people feel disheartened, people feel unsupported. And then I leave those
>
> sessions, I'm not getting paid extra for it, and I'm like, I have four more of these in the
>
> next week. Next one is for faculty. Oh God. And also, you have people yelling on a

Zoom session, and the president's there just watching you. So, then you have to navigate

that interjection.

Furthermore, some participants explained that they were expected to also post to social media

and at times they were unsure what to write because senior leaders did not provide guidance or

clarity. Charlie said,

In the past, there was this constant, what do you call it? There was this constant

expectation that we would have some kind of public statement or GIF whenever

something happened in the world. To either hold the space for students or to just say

something. And that becomes exhausting. It's like, which ones do you address? … And so

literally there's been times where we've been in all staff meetings and the virtual world

explodes, and I'm drafting a response to something that happened locally or in the world

because there was this sort of expectation [from senior leaders] that you need to say

something.

The excerpts provided by the participants took place during a time in higher education when

institutional leaders were being watched and scrutinized for their response to racial unrest. As the

quotes highlight, participants in this study were seeking guidance from their leaders; however,

senior leaders were cautious to engage and as a result, they relied on the multicultural center to

serve as the first line of defense.

Burdened to Train Staff and Faculty

Eight participants in the study were expected to facilitate diversity training for faculty

and staff. They argued that they were perceived as the expert. For example, Violeta shared that

faculty and staff assumed she was the diversity expert. She said "people will be like, well you're

the expert, and it always makes me uncomfortable 'cuz I'm like, am I? Is anyone really?" The

participants believed this expectation to lead diversity training was unreasonable and added extra

pressure to their workload. Further, they believed that diversity training and educating faculty

and staff should be the responsibility of Human Resources, a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), or

the Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Some participants believed that due

to their lack of power within the division, they questioned if training was received by those in the

division. JaRon explained he often has to train administrators and staff. He said,

> The bulk of my experience has been trying to educate my colleagues, and it's been tough
>
> because my bosses didn't get it. I'm educating my bosses and hoping that they also
>
> educate the people that they supervise. When we do divisional meetings around diversity
>
> and inclusion, I am the one leading it … I'm a director. I don't have a lot of influence
>
> within the division … And so, I am always seen to them as the expert of all things
>
> diversity and inclusion, and expected to do a lot more than what my role actually
>
> entailed.

In addition to training staff, some participants reported faculty requested training on

topics such as bias intervention, introduction to social justice concepts, White privilege, race and

racism, LGBTQIA+ safe zone, and Gen Z students and their needs. Violeta explained that

because she did not have professional staff, she relied on her undergraduate student staff to

deliver the training to faculty. She said,

> August and September are really busy cuz we get asked to come into everyone's training
>
> … our students are also asked to go into faculty spaces or staff spaces. So that happens
>
> too. For example, they recently wanted a presentation on working with Gen Zers. My
>
> students do that.

In contrast, Carmen shared she denied faculty requests because training faculty was not aligned

with the mission of her multicultural center. Carmen stated,

It's so hard to change the expectation of what my role on campus is … I'm not a trainer

for faculty and staff. I'm here to run a student center ... [and] take some care of our

BIPOC students, and our first-gen students, and our international students cuz there ain't

shit for them anywhere else on this campus … I had this professor send me an email just

earlier this week … asking if someone can do a training on how to pronounce names

from different languages. What?! I'm not doing that. I'm not training. Why would I train

faculty? That's not part of my job description. It's not part of the mission of the center …

I'm not a linguist. No, no. Just ask the student … But why would I be responsible for

training faculty and staff? It seems like such a stupid expectation. Really unrealistic …

that's an HR matter, if there's not a CDO or VP for DEI.

Tippy-Toed Support from White Colleagues

In addition to navigating relationships with senior leaders and faculty, more than half of

the participants indicated that their White administrative colleagues in other offices on campus

(e.g., student activities) also failed to provide support. These colleagues were parallel to the

participants in the study and often shared similar titles (e.g., director). Oftentimes, these

colleagues would make statements in meetings to indicate they supported the multicultural

center, however when the meeting was over, they did not follow through. For example, Maya's

colleagues within her division often made suggestions about how to improve diversity on

campus; however, these colleagues did not lend support. She said,

I'm just tired of the tippy-toeing of the false support from White folks … There's

constantly like, 'Oh, and what about this idea? Or how can we do this or that?', No. It's

just extra work and stress for me. You're adding things to my plate that I'm not paid to do

… So, I would say that it's just the false support. Education needs to be done on all parts

to make sure that we're feeling supported, and that students feel supported all around, not

just from people who hold similar identities to them.

Similar to Maya, Shein stated that colleagues representing other departments agreed to

collaborate on diversity initiatives; however, she and her assistant were the ones carrying the

load. She said,

I think people do a good job of saying, 'Let me know how we can help.' But when the

rubber touches the road … unless we give them specific directives…more times than not,

me and my assistant end up doing the brunt of the work.

Dr. J. explained that he is fortunate to work with colleagues who 'get it'. He attributed their

investment to the educational training they received in graduate school. However, he highlighted

that most of the roadblocks come from faculty. He stated,

Student affairs folks get it. They get that because student affairs, we're sitting every day

listening to the students. We understand their struggles and what they're going through.

So res life, counseling, student involvement, we're all very much in tune and on the same

page and work very well together. I think I've been into each of their staff meetings,

student group meetings to engage in some aspect or present something. But it's outside of

student affairs is where you get the roadblocks typically.

The participants' excerpts highlight that although some colleagues were willing to lend support,

they wanted to be told what to do. Carmen argued that this passive support added more work to

her plate. She argued,

In my first years here, my boss protected me from people on campus. She would say, 'no that's not what Carmen is here for. Do not ask Carmen to do that.' Anything that was DEI [diversity, equity, inclusion] related, people would ask, 'Oh can Carmen be on it? Can Carmen be a consultant? Can Carmen meet with so and so. Carmen, Carmen, Carmen, Carmen for anything DEI related. And I really was feeling like, and I still do, doing that to someone you are relinquishing your responsibility on campus or in your role to do that work on your own. And if Carmen is spending all this time fucking advising people or meeting with them, how is Carmen able to do her actual work of running a multicultural center? … If I'm doing all this other work with faculty and staff, how the hell can I run a center or connect with students and rebuild the center and rebuild relationships with students that were damaged

As highlighted in this second theme, participants were siloed in their roles and expected to carry the weight of diversity work without institutional support.

Theme 3: Directors Feel Compelled to Protect Students and Staff

Participants indicated their scope of work was multifaceted as they supported students with academic advising, financial resources, feelings of isolation, employment, housing, food insecurity, and much more. Some participants revealed students also relied on multicultural center directors to help them address heavier issues such as sexual assault. In addition to being a mentor and advisor to students, participants also felt deeply compelled to protect their staff. Two sub-themes emerged: 1) "It's Not Just Transactional Advising," and 2) Directors Protect Their Staff.

"It's Not Just Transactional Advising"

There was an overwhelming sense to protect students from any further harm. Fifteen participants reported they went above and beyond to protect their students because, as August stated, "our students are yearning for spaces, and they don't get a break from the things that are attacking their identities. They don't deserve a closed door when we told them that we'd be there for them." Participants reported students went to the multicultural center to get support on things that occurred inside of the classroom (e.g., faculty misgendering a student) and outside of the classroom (e.g., students seeking support on how to talk to their family about their sexual orientation). Charlie attributes this level of trust to the shared identities between multicultural center staff and the students they support. He shared, "students come to our centers because they don't need to explain things. They tell us the situation, and we can read between the lines." However, some directors shared that students would ask directors to provide guidance on issues that were above and beyond the scope of their expertise. Four participants highlighted that students went to the multicultural center staff to report sexual assault. Craig shared,

> There are things that I think my White colleagues, they just don't understand, and they certainly don't recognize the labor associated with it because it's not just a [transactional] conversation about academic major, and then you're sort of moving on, right? Oftentimes my conversations are about racism experienced on campus. It's misogyny and sexual assault. And so, then those are very heavy conversations … and honestly, it's closer to counseling or a counselor-type relationship.

Gloria acknowledged some of the topics presented to her multicultural center were not appropriate for her staff to address. Therefore, Gloria added a mental health counselor to her center so students did not have to seek those services on their own. In addition to racism and

sexism, participants helped students navigate the challenges they faced on campus as a result of socioeconomic status. JaRon shared,

> When my White colleagues leave for the day, they're done. But I have students messaging me and needing me for other things all hours of the day and night … And I don't think everybody else at the institution does that … For our inauguration, a student who was working with our catering department texted me and asked me, 'can you bring me a belt?' Which of my other colleagues are being asked by the students to bring them a belt because they don't have one for their outfit? Which of my other colleagues are being asked about the barber shop? 'Can you take me to the barbershop?' Right? 'Where's this kind of food here in this city? How can I find that?' My other colleagues aren't getting those questions.

Many of the participants spoke about ways they provided academic advising, career counseling, and financial aid counseling, to name a few. Maya explained oftentimes she has to intervene when other departments do not respond to marginalized students' inquiries on issues such as academic requirements to graduate from the institution. She shared,

> The other aspects have to do with just matriculation. There's just some shakiness on, 'you told me I can graduate but I'm still missing this class' or 'this person overlooked that I needed this class.' And that's typically our marginalized minority students who are like, 'how did this happen?' Or the lack of responsiveness from other areas or departments. So then I gotta get on the phone and say, 'Hey, the students telling me that they've tried contacting you.' Those are some of the things that I'm hearing.

Further, Carmen stated she has conversations with students about financial aid appeals, which is not the responsibility of a director of a multicultural center. However, she felt responsible to

provide this information because she believed her students wouldn't get it anywhere else. She

stated,

> Oh man, students bring me everything to solve or lend support. It's the usual academic
>
> stuff. Who's my advisor? What classes do I take? Oh, I can take these classes even
>
> though I'm not in my major? It's also, I don't know, it's just a lot of direct and really
>
> honest conversations about things, too. And people used to say this word, 'intrusive
>
> advising,' but I don't think shit is intrusive. I think that's just having a heart in your chest
>
> and caring about people and being emotionally intelligent.

Directors Protect Their Staff

In addition to taking care of their students, participants explained they felt a sense of

responsibility to "shoulder all of the burden" experienced by their staff. Several participants

shared they allocated time in their staff meetings to allow time and space to grieve racial

violence. Others took their staff out to lunch, happy hours, and bowling because as Mike

explained, "folks need to recharge their batteries." Similarly, when Nilsa's staff is organizing

healing spaces and writing statements in response to local violence, she makes sure to remind her

staff to take time off. In some instances, participants were presented with bad news from senior

administrators that could negatively impact the morale of the staff; thus, some participants

reported self-care was not enough. Gloria explained,

> There is a strong sense of responsibility and duty to protect my staff. I become aware of
>
> things and sometimes I don't tell my staff because I don't want them to be negatively
>
> impacted… So, there's that tension of: How do I keep this team motivated and doing their
>
> best work, while I know that there are some things going on at the top that aren't really
>
> conducive to that?

Similar to the conversations he has with Students of Color, Alejandro is supporting his Staff of Color to navigate tough conversations at work. He said,

> I want to make sure they feel validated in the work that they're doing … they come to me and say, I just had a heavy conversation with the student, can I talk to you?' Yeah, come on in. Yes, sit down with me. What do I need to work out with you? Or just, I'm a listening board right now. I'm sitting back, just throw it out there. Vomit of the mouth. What are your emotions right now? Tell me. And we will make it work.

Theme 4: Sexism and Racism Impact Women of Color's Work Experiences

The nine Women of Color in the study highlighted the racial and gendered dynamics that impacted the ways in which they were treated by students, supervisors, and colleagues. In the excerpt below, Nilsa described how her intersecting identities (e.g., race and gender) influenced how she was treated by her male colleagues. She explained,

> I think that there's a taxation that reaches far beyond just being a Person of Color, but specifically if you're a Woman of Color. You have the mother role. You have the administrator role. You have the professional role. You have the boss lady role … You have the role of having to make sure that you fit in enough so that you're well received at these corporate meetings. But you're not the one who gets invited to play golf, and honestly, I didn't wanna play golf. But the point being is that as a woman, I wasn't even offered. You don't see me in that way, even though I know that you need me in that way.

> Of this theme, two sub-themes emerged from the data: 1) Women of Color Expected to be Caretakers, and 2) Women of Color Silenced by Supervisors.

Women of Color Expected to be Caretakers

Six out of the nine Women of Color indicated they were expected to be motherly toward students. These projected ideals, values, and thoughts influenced how students perceived and treated the participants. For example, Amelia Bedelia shared that students expected her to 'fix their issues.' She stated,

> I think being a Black woman, people look at me as a mother figure … Even White students will come to me and be like, 'so my roommate told me to come talk to you, so I'm going to come talk to you.' … It's like Amelia Bedelia will fix it … She'll work through it. She got you … And so, there's a lot more emotional labor of being a Black woman and going out and having to literally give my labor of love daily in a way that nobody else understands. The way in which the extra emotional and labor support that I have to give to students is insurmountable.

Shein also acknowledged her students perceived her as motherly. She said,

> I tend to get called Mama Shein … there's this sense of nurturer or caretaker, or this is the office I go to when I just wanna fall apart and then walk out as if nothing happened. And I'm fine with that … because of my upbringing in a Caribbean household, we kind of put the needs of others ahead of ourselves.

One participant, Gloria, also shared she assumed a caretaker role similar to that of a family member over her students. However, she perceived her role as both a mother and an aunt. First she said, "Yeah, I am the mama. I gather the kids and I listen and I comfort." She continued to say,

> I think with students, I feel that sense of caretaker, somebody needs to look out for you. I have nieces and nephews who are almost college-age… I'd want to know that somebody

out their cares about them … And so, anything that I can do to make it better, make it

more positive, I would like to do.

Women of Color Silenced by Supervisors

In addition to being perceived as the caretakers by students, four Women of Color

disclosed they felt minimized by their male supervisors who often shared marginalized identities

(e.g., race and/or sexual orientation). And sometimes silencing was in conjunction with their

supervisors representing the women's ideas as their own. For example, Maya shared that her

supervisor often made decisions without consulting her. Furthermore, Maya reported on several

occasions that other staff members on her team knew more about what was going on within her

department than she did as the director. She said,

> It's not often, but there are times when I feel like I'm being worked around, and there are
>
> times that I don't feel like I have autonomy to make decisions. What I've been
>
> challenging myself with … is that I'm not biting my tongue this year. Something
>
> happened while I was out of the office, and when I asked for clarification, it seemed like
>
> another staff member knew more information about it than me. And so, I said, 'no, no,
>
> this can't happen. I'm the director.'

Maya continued to share that there have been many other instances when her director has made

risky decisions without considering the implications it would have on her job security.

On the other hand, Amelia Bedelia's former supervisor constantly invited her into

conversations to help resolve issues. However, she perceived this invitation as a way for him to

steal her ideas to leverage himself in the organization. She said,

> He's a man who got his job because he's a man. He's always like, 'this is my idea' and
>
> I'm like, 'No, doesn't make sense. What if you do it this way?' Then he'll look at me and

> say, 'Oh, I'm going to write that down.' Every time we talk, he is writing something
>
> down, and it's baffling to me how he keeps stealing my shit. Like, how is it that every
>
> time we talk, you have to write something down?! … And he's always like, 'I'm going to
>
> keep you around 'cause you always got an idea' yeah, okay. You mean I'm making you
>
> look good. All right. But that's the other thing maybe my colleagues need to know is that
>
> I literally have to make you all look good daily.

Amelia Bedelia indicated her former supervisor used her ideas to leverage himself in spaces she was not allowed to enter. In fact, she felt because of her ideas, he continued to advance upward in the organization.

Theme 5: Directors Pay a Physical Toll

All participants spoke about the physical toll they experienced as a result of the work associated with their role (e.g., burnout, cultural taxation, trauma, etc.). Furthermore, some participants questioned staying in their roles due to the exhaustion and self-sacrifice that goes unrecognized by senior administration. From the collected data, four sub-themes emerged: 1) Directors Experience Burnout, 2) Directors Are Reliving Trauma, 3) Directors' Identities Are Woven Into Their Work, and 4) Directors Ask, "Who Takes Care of Me?"

Directors Experience Burnout

Almost all of the participants in the study reported they experienced some sort of burnout associated with their role. They highlighted that as People of Color, they expended additional energy navigating conversations and job tasks surrounding race and equity, which resulted in them being exhausted, burnt out, and/or getting sick. For example, Mike stated,

> The institution will just keep using you until then they feel satisfied with whatever you
>
> did. So, on the back end is that invisible labor and racial fatigue … and it's something

HR won't recognize. You won't get a bonus for that. That will never be in your

evaluation. They will never understand it …How does one compartmentalize how I feel

and how I need to move to protect my peace. But then how do I show up? Because you

have to show up to be successful at this work and pour out for others so that they feel

seen, validated, loved, and heard. So, it's tough … Who am I gonna go to talk about racial

fatigue? Who am I gonna talk to about this invisible labor? Who am I gonna talk to about

these constant microaggressions? Who am I gonna talk to about this ain't working no

more.

While Mike's reflection represents a majority of the stories shared by participants who talked

about the toll it takes to support marginalized students without institutional support, Craig stated

his burnout was caused by his colleagues. He shared,

I wish that they [White colleagues] recognize the ways that they participate in that

perpetuating burnout of their Staff of Color. They actively perpetuate it by, 'oh you

know, you should be on this committee. It's a great opportunity.' It is a great opportunity,

but you're also adding stuff to my plate, and I'm going to be the only Person of Color.

Maya's burnout was a result of her balancing the external, socio-political unrest and its impact

on her staff. She said,

I'm unable to do my job in certain ways because of the fatigue and exhaustion. And not

the work at work is too much, but what's happening outside of work… we have a staff

meeting every Tuesday … and I can't even go into my agenda because we are having a

conversation about the Black man who was just killed in Memphis, Tennessee.

Directors Are Reliving Trauma

Fifteen of the participants indicated they entered the field of higher education because they wanted to make sure students did not experience the same racism they experienced years ago. However, 10 of the participants stated it was disheartening to hear their students' experiences were similar to theirs, and in fact, some said hearing these stories felt like they were reliving the racial trauma they experienced as Students of Color. For example, Charlie stated,

> And so, it's hard to be productive, if you wanna use that word, in pumping out programs or whatnot without addressing what people are coming into both in experiencing. It's really hard to be in this space and it not affect you at some level. Some of the topics folks wanna cover are heavy, and so even as a facilitator, I may have similar backgrounds or similar experiences… I've been in spaces where I say to myself, 'I'm really reliving some of my own trauma.'

As Charlie discussed, when he is asked to facilitate diversity training, the stories of the participants often reminded him of the racist experiences he had as an undergraduate student. Alejandro shared a similar experience,

> As staff of color that do this work, we carry the weight … we carry the cultural piece mentality of, 'my people need me' … So, we're reliving our own cultural traumas that we had and working with students through the current traumas and helping them figure it out, but thinking to yourself, 'oh my God, I'm going through this again.'

Directors' Identities Are Woven Into Their Work

Fourteen participants indicated diversity work is personal because their racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual orientation identities are similar to the students whom they advocate for. Mike captured the complexity of this phenomenon when he said, "It's very hard every day to

separate who I am and the work that I do." As a result, participants shared during unrest, such as

the murder of Black and Brown men and women, going to work was sometimes a struggle.

August shared,

> When we went through the summer protests, it was important for people to know that
>
> these things affected me as a human being … My students have seen me cry because I
>
> couldn't get through something without feeling something because I'm part of this. There
>
> are days that I don't want to come to work … when I'm like, 'all right, I can't do it today.'
>
> But … if I'm having a bad day, and I have to be at work, I'm coming to work. It's the
>
> 'tears of the clown syndrome.' The show must go on. If you're a comedian, you can't
>
> have a bad day as a comedian. You gotta get up there and make people laugh and you'll
>
> have your bad day when you get off the stage. And for me, sometimes this is a stage ... I
>
> put my stuff to the side just to make sure that our students are well taken care of.

> Similar to August, JaRon shared during the protests surrounding George Floyd's murder;

he was unable to be present for his students because he was affected by what was going on. He

said,

> I have struggled recently with how my identity shows up, particularly around violence
>
> with Black men, particularly by the hands of police, law enforcement, or other kinds of
>
> authorities of power. So, I was getting a bit burnt out and just not going to work, taking
>
> more time off than I would typically do, or even when I was there, just not being fully
>
> present. Then my students would see that I'm not myself. They're like, 'so what's wrong?
>
> Are you okay?' And sometimes I was honest with them, and say, 'I'm struggling a little
>
> bit right now just because of all that's going on.' And other times I'm like, 'no, I'm okay.
>
> It's fine. Nothing is wrong. I'm tired, but we got work to do, so let's get to it.'

Both August and JaRon highlighted that social unrest took a toll on them as Men of Color, and at times, it impacted their ability to be fully present with students. Gloria described her experience as a psychic and emotional weight that can't be described to her White colleagues. She said,

> There is this entire reckoning with what it means to look like you, and come from where you come from, and be here. And there's a psychic and emotional weight and amount of time that needs to be invested in thinking through those things on top of then having to advocate for your own dignity in these spaces that you deserve to be. I don't think that's something you can just explain to a White person, especially a White man. And so, yeah, it's really hard to describe the way multicultural spaces breathe life into students, especially if you don't know what it's like to not have air, to not be able to breathe.

Directors Ask, "Who Takes Care of Me?"

In addition to participants disclosing the burnout and fatigue associated with their work, 10 participants also discussed the lack of self-care. Unfortunately, although they encouraged their staff and students to take care of themselves, they failed to follow their own advice. Five participants, who identified as spouses, stated they often went home and unloaded their burdens onto their partners. For example, JaRon shared he would speak with his wife about work issues, and at other times he would withdraw completely. He said,

> Sometimes I withdraw from everything … I'll just be in bed. I don't even know if it's rest cause I'm not really resting cause my mind is going at a thousand miles per hour. So no, I don't talk about it to people. I need to find appropriate ways to at least talk. I do like to journal, so sometimes that is helpful, just a way to get things kind of off my chest. But yeah, I struggle with self-care. I am huge at telling our students, this is what you need to do … and I'm horrible at taking my own advice.

Alejandro felt guilty unloading his work problems to his wife and kids because he recognized it

brought the mood down at home. However, Alejandro struggled with finding an outlet to discuss

his experiences. He shared,

> I'm affected by this. At work, I take care of other people and check in on them. Like the
>
> students, are you good? My staff, you good? But then once I take that hat off, who checks
>
> in on me? What about me? Who takes care of me?

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I presented the findings from the collected data which included

participants' experiences as multicultural center directors of color. I discussed the five

overarching themes and respective sub-themes that I constructed through phenomenological data

analysis. In Chapter 5, I provide a discussion of the findings, including how the findings relate to

the presented literature and chosen theoretical frameworks Critical Race Theory and the Theory

of Racial Tasks. I address the strengths and limitations of this study, and the implications for

counselor education graduate programs, higher education administrators, and researchers.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to better understand the lived experiences of multicultural center directors of color who are situated in a mid-level manager position at an institution of higher education. In the previous chapter, I presented the findings from participant interviews which included five themes and several sub-themes. In this chapter, I present my interpretation of the findings and the strengths and limitations of the study. I also provide an overview of the implications for counselor education graduate programs and university senior leaders in higher education. I conclude with recommendations for future research.

Summary of Findings and Discussion

In this summary, I discuss each finding. I situate my analysis in relation to both the literature and the chosen theoretical frameworks: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and the Theory of Racial Tasks (TRT).

Organizational Infrastructures Maintain Racial Hierarchies in Higher Education

The first finding highlighted the organizational infrastructures that serve as roadblocks to multicultural center directors of color on college campuses. Roadblocks included limited access to power, lack of visibility, and lack of funding. As indicated in Chapter 4, only one participant in this study reported to the president and the remaining participants were as far as four reporting lines away. As a result of the reporting structure, many were unable to attend key meetings to contribute to systemic decisions. A few of the participants were allowed to attend meetings with senior leaders but served in non-voting ad-hoc roles. This presented challenges to the participants because they were unable to address institutional inequities, such as student services needed for marginalized students. The lack of power obtained by multicultural center directors hindered the

students they served. Gomez et al., (2015) and Steele (2018) argued that when People of Color do not have a seat at the decision-making table, dominant White norms continue to saturate organizational policies. These dominant White norms can be reflected in many organizational practices such as the recruitment and retention of historically marginalized students, recruitment and retention of Staff of Color (Gasman et al., 2011), an institutions commitment to diversity and equity training (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Museus et al., 2015), compensation of Staff of Color (Ryan et al., 2012), as well as policies related to decision making power (Gardner et al., 2014). The results of this dissertation study were consistent with their findings.

An additional infrastructure that maintained racial hierarchies is the lack of financial resources. The participants argued that finances were necessary for directors to hire support staff to engage and deliver campus-wide initiatives. As indicated in Chapter 4, sadly many of the participants relied on undergraduate student workers in the absence of adequate full-time professional staff. And as a result, participants were unable to advance equity on their campuses due to limited professional and skilled full-time staff. This finding supports previous research where scholars argued that higher education institutions underfund diversity and equity initiatives (Harris & Patton, 2017; Hypolite, 2020a; Patton, 2006; Patton et al., 2019; Reid & Ebede, 2018; Stewart & Bridges, 2011). The lack of funding allocated to multicultural centers hindered participants' ability to engage in programming that extended beyond the surface level. Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt (2019) argued that senior leaders limit funding to historically marginalized groups as a way to minimize marginalized groups' ability to mobilize and engage in systemic change.

Multicultural Center Directors Lack Agency

Several participants discussed that the dualities of their role complicated their work experiences. In particular, the findings suggest that senior leaders underscored the tension of the multicultural center director role. In fact, some participants indicated that they felt constrained to support Students of Color while operating within the boundaries of White-Eurocentric norms. Others described their role as a co-conspirator operating behind closed doors with marginalized students. As a result, participants wrestled with how much they could push back against their institutions for fear of being reprimanded or outcasted. This finding is novel in the literature and contributes to the scholarship.

Multicultural Centers Serve as Physical Barrier Between Whites and Marginalized Groups

In addition to participants being prevented from occupying spaces with institutional leaders (e.g., presidents, deans), some participants in the study explained that their multicultural centers were hidden away from main campus spaces (e.g., basements). As a result, centers seemed to be visibly marginal to the work of the university. This finding supports previous research that suggests organizations reinforce a hierarchy whereby marginalized communities and the dominant White culture occupy differentiated spaces associated with their rank and status (Bankole, 2005; Harris & Patton, 2017; Princes, 1994; Stewart & Bridges, 2011). The physical distancing between Whites and racial and ethnic minorities is a key concept of the theoretical framework of TRT. Wingfield and Alston (2014) explained that People of Color are hired to facilitate racial tasks in an effort to preserve White privilege. Therefore, when senior leaders decide to place multicultural centers at the outskirts of campus, it is done to maintain White privilege, and as a result, multicultural center directors and their students are further made invisible on their campuses.

This first finding suggests that some institutional leaders of higher education maintain organizational norms that harm multicultural center directors and students whom they serve. Multicultural center directors are doing their jobs within an organizational structure whereby power is provided to a specific group, and those in power exclude People of Color who work in multicultural centers. Consequently, multicultural center directors are hired to support the most marginalized; however, directors are equally marginalized and not provided funding, adequate space allocation, or the power to make changes on their campuses. As a result, some participants are confined to programming that is performative (e.g., cultural food events, movie nights). The surface-level programming does not allow for directors of multicultural centers the ability to interrogate and address inequity at institutions of higher education.

Multicultural Center Directors Expected to Ease Racial Tensions

The second finding from this study suggests that senior administrators, faculty, and staff relinquished their responsibilities to multicultural center directors. That is, multicultural center directors are burdened to serve as the front line of defense for their campuses. This burden was prominent during heightened racial turmoil on campuses. Some senior leaders relied on multicultural center directors to moderate emotionally charged campus-wide forums and write memos to affirm an institution's commitment to diversity without support. As a result, others at the institution (e.g., White faculty, staff) also assumed a bystander role and expected the multicultural center to carry our racialized labor. Many of the participants felt pressured to engage in these roles because of the differential power dynamics between student affairs and academic affairs. This finding is novel and contributes to the existing multicultural center director literature.

This second finding illuminates another way in which multicultural center directors carry out racial tasks for organizations. Wingfield and Alston (2014) asserted People of Color are expected to engage in occupational tasks that involve taking care of racial and ethnic minorities. Thus, when White senior leaders absolve themselves from being on the front lines of addressing institutional racism, multicultural centers and their staff serve as a psychological and physical barrier between those in power and the most marginalized. Although this phenomenon seems egregious and malicious, CRT scholars argued that racism is ingrained in the fabric of our history and is almost unrecognizable in our systems (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Thus, there is a general expectation that multicultural center directors would assume these racialized roles. However, CRT provides scholars with the opportunity to include the voices of People of Color, and as such, the participants in this story highlighted the ways in which systemic racism impacts their role. As noted in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, voices of marginalized groups are often presented from a deficit perspective and CRT counters that perspective.

Directors Shield Students and Staff from Institutional Racism

The third finding suggests that as a result of White administrators having limited knowledge of the injustices experienced by marginalized groups, coupled with the lack of culturally-competent college student advising, multicultural center practitioners are forced to take on the burden of supporting historically marginalized students. This third finding is supported by Luedke's (2017) scholarship which highlighted that White college administrators often do not have necessary skills to provide holistic support to college students who identified as Black, Latinx, and Biracial. Thus, People of Color at institutions of higher education take on unpaid roles to care for these students. The participants in this study took immense pride in the "labor of love" they invested to protect their students from institutional harm (e.g., racism,

sexism). Multicultural center directors cultivated safe spaces for their students that mirrored a one-stop-shop where students could receive a multitude of student support services under a centralized office. The directors supported students with their financial constraints (e.g., paying tuition, having appropriate attire for university events), problems with faculty (e.g., reporting a negative encounter in a classroom), identity exploration (e.g., needing support in coming out to friends), academic challenges (e.g., failing a class), and reporting Title IX incidents (e.g., sexual assault).

The services that the multicultural center directors of color provided align with Yosso's (2005) Community Cultural Wealth Framework. That is, participants in this dissertation study ensured that their students had the knowledge and resources to develop their resiliency to institutional racism. Participants felt compelled to protect their students at all costs because as scholars previously noted, college Students of Color continue to experience isolation, microaggressions, and racial hostility which impact their retention to graduation (Benitez, 2010; Carthell et al., 2021; Harper, 2020; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Lutz et al., 2013; Pittman, 1994; Shuford, 2011; Watson et al., 2002). As a result, the participants in this study utilized their knowledge of educational systems to ensure that their students had access to campus resources. Furthermore, participants went above and beyond to advocate for students to colleagues and senior leaders.

Shielding Multicultural Center Staff

In addition to shielding students from institutional racism, most participants who had support staff acknowledged feeling compelled to protect their staff. In particular, most participants shared that their staff was relatively new to the field (e.g., previous undergraduate student leaders, recent graduate students). As seasoned professionals with more than 5-years of

experience working in higher education, the participants of this study understood first-hand the stressors associated with supporting historically marginalized students. Furthermore, as Knox (2023) reported, staff who work in the area of diversity, equity, and inclusion did not remain in their roles for very long. Therefore, participants went above and beyond to ensure their staff felt validated, supported, and well taken care of. However, when self-care was not enough, some participants explained that they shouldered the burden to ease the working conditions experienced by their staff.

Women of Color Directors Experience Stereotypes & Controlling Images

The Women of Color in this study identified aspects of their work in different ways than their male counterparts. Because of the historical legacy of slavery, Black women continue to be subjected to socially constructed stereotypical and controlling images (e.g., Mammy) which Collins (2000) argued are used to justify differential treatment between groups. The ways in which students, staff, and faculty treated the Women of Color multicultural center directors in this study reinforced sexism, ageism, and classism. In contrast to the male participants, the Women of Color reported that White students and Students of Color expected women directors to be nurturing, emotionally available, and someone who would "solve their problems" as two participants indicated. This level of care is similar to what scholars describe as Other-Mothering. Other-Mothering is defined as the role Black women stepped into when orphaned children were separated from their parents during slave auctions (Mawhinney, 2011). Although students and staff projected their stereotypes onto the Women of Color participants, some of the women embraced and took pride in this motherly role. After further exploration of degree attainment, many of the women pursued degrees within human services (e.g., education, social work); thus,

it could be argued that their chosen academic degrees groomed these women to assume stereotypical caretaker roles.

In addition to students projecting their stereotypes on Women of Color, participants' academic credentials and professional capabilities were questioned by faculty. Faculty asserted their dominant status in decision-making conversations, thus leaving Women of Color to carry out racialized labor. Faculty assumed that they could make demands of multicultural center directors such as requests on minuscule topics (e.g., how to pronounce student names) as well as expecting multicultural centers to execute all things diversity related. As authors of TRT highlighted, these faculty members internalized certain expectations of these Women of Color, and faculty actions further perpetuated racial and gender hierarchies (Wingfield & Alston, 2014).

The perception that these Women of Color were to carry out racialized tasks was replicated with their direct supervisors. Some of the Women of Color in this study stated that, at times, they were made invisible by their male supervisors who also shared marginalized identities (e.g., race, sexual orientation). In fact, Women of Color would share their ideas with their managers and some managers would represent these ideas as their own in meetings with senior leaders. The relationship between Women of Color and their supervisors highlighted the dynamics of structural intersectionality, which is a form of systemic domination. Crenshaw (1989) attributed this to sexism, whereby male privilege is exerted and Women of Color are further removed from having access to power.

Directors Experience Racial Battle Fatigue and Trauma

The last finding of this study contributes to and aligns with the extensive scholarship that highlighted the emotional and physical distress experienced by employees who advance equity, diversity, and inclusion. This finding aligned with the scholarship of Anderson (2021), Gorski

(2015, 2019), as well as Gorski and Chen (2015). These scholars asserted that social justice

activists of color experienced physical and emotional distress differently than White activists.

First, activists of color often do not have power; thus, they may be limited in their ability to

affect changes in social attitudes and policies (Anderson, 2001). Second, activists of color often

have to navigate resistance from their institutions (e.g., lack of funding, lack of acknowledgment

of racism) which further heightens racial inequity (Gorski, 2019). As a result, People of Color

who engage in equity work are more likely to experience racial battle fatigue (RBF).

Smith introduced the term RBF to describe the accumulation of fatigue caused by racism

and microaggressions. In particular, People of Color experience RBF as a result of being

positioned to respond to racialized incidents within organizations (Smith, 2008). Many of the

multicultural center directors' descriptions of their fatigue align with RBF. For example,

participants reported feeling exhausted when responding to emotionally charged issues rooted in

racism. For many of the participants, this exhaustion continued throughout the academic

semester as they experienced resistance from colleagues as well as racially hostile environments.

Further, their exhaustion was a result of supporting students with histories of trauma and lending

support to their staff and the campus community. Participants performed these duties while

simultaneously experiencing isolation (e.g., being the only diversity administrator for the entire

campus). In addition to carrying this weight, participants experienced tokenism (e.g., sitting on

committees, "just to check a box") and microaggressions (e.g., being mistaken for another person

of color). Political ramifications also compounded participant fatigue (e.g., Florida politicians

threatening to defund multicultural centers), as well as racial violence against Black and Brown

men and women (e.g., the murder of Tyre Nichols). Unfortunately, despite participants'

recognition that RBF impacted their quality of their work experiences, they felt pigeonholed to

do the work. Some participants believed that they would be limited to solely doing diversity

work. Furthermore, many participants adopted the mentality, "if not me, then who?" Despite

their exhaustion, the multicultural center directors constantly showed up every day to support

their students and staff.

In addition to RBF, the findings of this study suggested that participants re-lived cultural

trauma when their racial identities mirrored those of the students who also experienced trauma.

Participants attributed this to the roles they played in lending emotional support to marginalized

students. The pressures at work were substantive and unrelenting; and unfortunately, some

participants experienced associated health complications as a result of their positions (e.g., high

blood pressure, diminished mental health). To ease the health and wellness concerns, participants

engaged in self-care practices such as taking yoga classes or attending meetings hosted by

affinity groups on their campuses. However, self-care practices were not curative and some

participants withdrew from their work environments (e.g., calling out sick, limiting their

engagement with colleagues and students), suffered in silence, or carried their tension home,

which impacted their home environments. This last finding suggested that there is an emotional

toll that comes with leading diversity and inclusion initiatives in higher education. Some

participants found ways to engage in self-care; however, at times self-care was not enough and

some participants shared that because of the workload and work environments, they experienced

physical and mental illness.

Strengths and Limitations

This study has several strengths. The first strength is the focus on mid-level diversity

administrators and their work experiences on a college campus. The current research about

diversity administrators often focuses on those in positions of power (e.g., a chief diversity

officer). This study fills the gaps in the research conducted on mid-level diversity administrators who are often invisible and have less power within institutions of higher education. In addition, previous research on cultural centers often focused on how students benefit from single race-based identity centers (e.g., Black Cultural Center), the services these centers provide, as well as how the staff of those centers support students with intersecting identities (Ancis et al., 2000; Benitez, 2010; Harris & Patton, 2017; Hypolite, 2020b; Luedke, 2017; Patton, 2006, 2010; Patton & Hannon, 2008; Reid & Ebede, 2018; Shuford, 2011; Sutton, 1998; Young & Hannon, 2002). This current research focuses on multicultural centers directors who support marginalized students across various identities under a single center (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, socioeconomic status, national origin); thus, this study contributes to the emerging scholarship on multicultural centers staff in higher education.

It was important to use two organizational theories that would place attention on the organizational structures that reinforce systemic inequalities. Therefore, a second strength of this study is the use of two theoretical approaches that allowed me to use a critical lens to place systemic racism at the core of the focus. While CRT scholars consider a broader analysis of structural racism as a primary tenet of inequality (Ladson-Billings, 2020), TRT allowed me to examine the explicit ways systemic racism permeates organizations through dynamics such as physical space, reporting structures, and invisible organizational dynamics that reinforce racial hierarchies. Integrating these two theories shaped everything in this study, from how questions were asked as well to how data was analyzed.

My experience as a previous multicultural center administrator served as a strength of the study. As a researcher with insider status, I was able to draw from my years of experience of being deeply engaged in the work to create a study that would dig deeper into the nuances of the

role of a multicultural center administrator. During my doctoral studies, I attended conferences

and workshops facilitated by diversity practitioners. At these workshops, attendees repeated

stories that highlighted structural inequities that impacted their work experiences. Thus, I felt

responsible to give an account of the experiences reported by my colleagues. In particular, I felt

compelled to not only highlight the exhaustion experienced by diversity warriors, but to name

the structural patterns that reinforce inequitable working environments.

Another strength of this study was the data collection methods. I employed semi-

structured interview techniques followed by member checking. Semi-structured interviews

allowed participants the opportunity to expand on their stories in ways that were meaningful to

them. As a result of the interview platform provided and the measures taken to ensure ethical

compliance and participant anonymity, participants indicated feeling comfortable talking about

the good and the bad. In addition to the interview style, the use of technology allowed me to

interview participants across the United States. As previously indicated, participants were

located across 12 states: Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New

York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin. Furthermore, there was a wide

vast range of institution types such as small liberal arts colleges, religious universities, R-1

institutions, PWIs, HSIs, private and public institutions, as well as commuter schools. Finally,

the participants ranged in age as well as years of experience in higher education.

The current study has limitations as well. The first limitation of the study is the chosen

theoretical frameworks do not place an emphasis on intersectionality. As the researcher, I was

not originally seeking to explore identities outside of race and ethnicity. That is, I did not intend

to explore the gendered institutional processes that impact Women of Color. However, it was

clear that participants contextualized their work experiences through various lenses beyond race

(e.g., gender, class). A second limitation of the study is the lack of ethnic representation from American Indians, Indigenous populations, Alaskan Americans, and Pacific Islanders. Furthermore, while I had representation from an Asian American participant and a Middle Eastern American participant, it was not a significant number within the study. In addition to ethnic identities, this study did not garner participants who represented two-year colleges. As a result, these findings cannot be generalizable to all institutions of higher education. An additional limitation was my inability to collect comprehensive demographic data from each participant. Demographic data would have allowed me to engage in comparative analysis when examining my data. For example, having information on academic degree attainment would add an additional layer of depth to contextualizing how participants perceived their role (e.g., through the lens of counseling, through the lens of an administrator). Finally, due to the emotionally charged conversations, virtual interviews did limit the ways in which I could provide emotional support to participants.

Though these limitations are important to note, the strengths of this study are such that it contributes to the emerging literature on multicultural center directors of color. The findings of this study present areas that can be explored in future research with diverse populations. Furthermore, this study has important implications for counselor education graduate programs, senior administrators of higher education, and scholars/practitioners interested in multicultural center directors in higher education.

Implications

The findings from this study are important to counselor education graduate programs as well as senior administrators in higher education. In the following section, I provide recommendations.

Implications for Counselor Education Programs

In a recent scan of multicultural center director positions on www.HigherEdJobs.com (2023, April 14), most employers seek candidates who have a Masters degree in higher education administration and/or student affairs. As noted in Chapter 3, four participants had Master's degrees in counseling. Since this dissertation focuses on the lived experiences of professional staff, my recommendations are intended for counselor education graduate programs that prepare students to assume multicultural center staff roles. In the section to follow, I provided recommendations for various aspects of counselor education programs.

Highlighting Counselor Education Programs as a Pathway to Student Affairs

The 2021 CACREP Vital Statistics (CACREP, n.d.) data illustrated enrollment of students who are interested in student affairs within a counseling program were on the decline. For example, in 2021, of the 71,152 students enrolled in Counselor Education at both the Master's and Doctoral Level, only 240 students specialized in college counseling and student affairs, which equates to .003% of students. In 2020, 260 students pursued the student affairs degree in counseling programs. It may be argued that students who are interested in working in student affairs are pursuing degrees in higher education administration programs as opposed to counseling programs. However, the findings of this study suggests that multicultural center directors are uniquely positioned to address the psychological impact of the systemic inequities faced by their students. The findings of this study also suggest that multicultural center director's roles, at times, required foundational counseling skills in order to attend to the concerns of both historically marginalized students and staff. As a result, counselor education programs should re-introduce the counseling professional as a pathway for a career in student affairs. That is, counselor educators should find ways to communicate the value of having a degree in counseling

as it relates to working with historically disenfranchised communities. To accomplish this, graduate program coordinators should recruit students at higher education conferences such as NASPA.

Counselor Education Program and Curriculum Recommendation

In addition to placing an emphasis on recruitment, counselor education programs should adequately prepare graduate students to assume roles that dismantle White supremacy culture in organizations. That is, counselor educators should be prepared to engage in anti-racist work to disrupt organizational norms that keep marginalized communities at the margins (Okun, 1999; 2021). This work is critical because as the findings of this study suggests, multicultural center directors are expected to provide programmatic services that mitigate student's negative experiences with institutional oppression. Therefore, it is important for counselors to go beyond performative level programming and have the skills necessary to challenge the status quo. Examples include students' ability to identify university policies that negatively impact the success of historically marginalized students.

Multicultural Counseling Courses. The findings of this study highlighted that multicultural center directors in higher education advised and mentored students across many intersecting cultural identities. Furthermore, multicultural center directors must be keenly aware of the ways in which intersecting identities can further heighten one's experience with oppression. As Okun (2021) stated, "none of these characteristics stand alone; they intersect and intertwine in devastating ways (p. 21)." As a former clinical faculty member who taught multicultural counseling, I see the danger in isolating this course to be responsible to cover diversity topics. However, I do see value in this course elevating students' understandings of intersectionality, as well as the ways that White supremacy culture continues to operate as a

norm in organizations. Therefore, faculty who teach this specific course should 1) ensure that the course explores intersectionality, along with the associated power, privilege, and oppression of these intersecting identities; 2) implement readings that highlight how power pervades organizational systems, and 3) teach students how to engage in advocacy.

   Counselor Educator Supervision. According to the 2016 CACREP Standards (CACREP, n.d.), candidates for a Masters degree in counseling student affairs are required to complete fieldwork courses such as practicum and internship. The findings of this study suggested that multicultural centers often serve as a one-stop-shop where marginalized students receive a wide range of services. As such, directors must be equipped with strong administrative skills. Thus, counselor education supervisors can utilize internship and practicum as a way for students to get hands-on experience in a real-world setting. Therefore, faculty supervisors should consult with site supervisors to identify the current trends impacting multicultural centers. Next, both parties should design agreed-upon learning outcomes of the practicum and internship experiences that would be specific to the needs of multicultural centers. For example, site supervisors should provide graduate students with the opportunities to identify the key scholars who conduct research on multicultural affairs, attend multicultural affairs conferences, participate in campus-wide committee meetings with key stakeholders, advise a culturally based student organization, and facilitate a diversity workshop for student leaders. Furthermore, site supervisors should also provide students with the opportunity to build their network and meet other professional staff members who work in multicultural affairs.

Implications for Senior Leaders in Higher Education

Participants in this study experienced challenges and identified the necessary changes necessary in order to improve their work experiences. Utilizing their feedback and my analysis of the findings, I provide several implications for administrators in higher education.

Exploring Structural Inequities

Multicultural center directors provide academic and social support services to students who have been and still are historically marginalized. These administrators are trained to identify equity gaps in higher education and tasked to design intervention strategies to support students. Unfortunately, many participants in this study listed many institutional barriers that prevented them from closing the gaps (e.g., unable to vote in meetings). Therefore, it is imperative for senior leaders to develop a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which institutional policies and practices hinder and benefit the success of multicultural centers. This can be accomplished via surveys and data collection that explore the working conditions of multicultural center directors and their staff. It would also be beneficial to collect data on the students who utilize those spaces. In addition, senior leaders should allow multicultural center directors to attend meetings and have voting power on key decisions.

Participants reported that those in positions of power (e.g., presidents, provosts, deans) overwhelmingly identified as White men and women. The demographic makeup of the participants' institutions is consistent with scholarship that suggested that the power to make change is often within the realms of White trustees, faculty, deans, and chairs (Steele, 2018). Due to Whiteness pervading institutional leadership, scholars argued that senior leaders must first acknowledge that White privilege is embedded in the institutional framework of most higher education institutions (McIntyre, 1997; McNair et al., 2020). Once senior leaders accept that

White norms dominate higher education, they should engage in an internal audit to examine the educational environment. McNair and colleagues (2020) recommended the following as starting points: 1) develop knowledge of inequity in higher education specifically a historical examination of racial stratification in educational settings; 2) acknowledge that racism has shaped policies and practices; 3) agree on shared definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion; and 4) engage in multicultural competence training. Coupled with this list, higher education senior leaders should offer Okun's (1999) writing on White supremacy culture and engage in conversations about how this culture is reproduced at their institution. Senior leaders should bring in a diversity consulting firm that specializes in diversity and equity to lead these conversations.

Clarifying the Role of a Multicultural Center

Participants noted that they were one of few to advance diversity and equity at their institutions which led to burnout. McNair and colleagues (2020) recommended that leaders align strategic priorities with diversity and inclusion institutional goals and build a culture at the institution that requires faculty and staff to be part of the equity agenda. Unfortunately, some institutions create dedicated diversity positions to address an expansive array of inequities without much funding, structure, guidance, and institutional support. Therefore, senior leaders must clarify the needs of particular populations on campus (e.g., students, faculty, staff), and create campus-wide strategies that address their needs distinctly. To accomplish this, institutions should engage in evidence-based interventions that begin with a needs assessment (i.e., data collection). Once data is collected and analyzed, senior leaders and members of the senior leadership team should design goals that advance the institution's commitment to diversity. Once those goals are established, senior leaders must communicate this priority to everyone across the

university, and design appropriate interventions that meet the needs of all constituencies on the

college campus. Greenwald et al., (2022) provided the following as suggested interventions: 1)

make disparity findings a common practice, 2) engage in bias reduction, 3) any trainings should

be followed up with observations to assess improvements in behavior, and 4) appoint a chief

diversity officer who sits at the president's cabinet and who has access to data, policy change

capabilities, and a fully functional staff (p. 33).

Campus-Wide Accountability

Participants explained the overwhelming weight they carried as the few who are

responsible to understand the needs of historically marginalized groups. Therefore, senior leaders

should require all faculty and staff to engage in professional development that exposes them to

diversity, equity, and inclusion. In particular, training on providing services through a culturally

inclusive lens (e.g., academic advising) would be beneficial. A second area of development

should be placed on multicultural competence and humility allowing faculty and staff the

opportunity to increase their self-awareness of their biases, privilege, and oppression. This can be

accomplished by outsourcing diversity, equity, and inclusion consultants to lead the campus

through implicit-bias interventions. Senior leaders should also consider integrating multicultural

competencies into job performances to ensure all employees are expected to engage in diversity

and inclusion at their institution. In particular, awareness of oneself and of others is paramount.

Therefore, employees should be provided with a listing of workshops and seminars that they

must attend and/or participate in. These workshops and webinars should be interactive and

include reflective activities. Employees must then be able to demonstrate their knowledge within

the workplace environment, for example employees should be observed in committee meetings

as it relates to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Furthermore, each administrator should be

expected to have the knowledge and skills to deliver entry-level diversity workshops to their own

staff. To accomplish this, the vice president of the division alongside the director of the

multicultural center should identify the most commonly asked questions related to diversity.

Then, the director should train their colleagues across campus (residence life, student life,

student conduct) and provide them with a shell so that their colleague can deliver diversity

trainings to their staff. By doing so, this will also build a speaker's bureau within the campus

whereby alleviating the taxation experienced by multicultural center directors.

Supervisors of Multicultural Center Directors

Some participants felt their supervisors were ill-equipped to provide them with adequate

supervision. These supervisors were positioned in senior leadership positions at the institution.

Therefore, it is particularly important that supervisors of multicultural center directors recognize

the physical and emotional weight of the work. In addition, supervisors must examine how the

institution alleviates White colleagues from taking responsibility for addressing systemic racism.

In order for supervisors to advocate for their supervisees, it is imperative that they invest in

developing their own multicultural competence. Therefore, they should attend conferences and

participate in webinars and educational sessions that provide them with the tools to be a well

informed and action oriented. Next, supervisors must also protect multicultural center staff in

similar ways that directors protect their students. Multicultural center directors are vulnerable to

exploitation and burnout; thus, supervisors must challenge unfair operational norms that are

harmful to these centers and those who work within them. Supervisors must use their positions of

power to address unfair working conditions in spaces that multicultural center directors are not

privy to.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on the experiences of multicultural center directors of color. While this study generates new knowledge, more can be done. Thus, I propose several future areas of research.

As discussed in the limitations, this study did not use an intersectional lens as a theoretical framework. A finding of this study suggests that women directors of multicultural centers may engage in roles similar to that of a mammy, therefore a proposed study could explore the work experiences of Women of Color using a theoretical framework rooted in intersectionality. This will allow scholars to explore how identities such as gender, sexual orientation, and age impact the work experiences of multicultural center directors.

It is also important for research to attend to the politics of location. At the time of data collection, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis' intended to eliminate funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion at Florida's public colleges, including multicultural centers (The Florida Senate, 2023). Therefore, it would be worth exploring the experiences of multicultural center directors within the state of Florida.

A limitation of this study was the exclusion of two-year colleges. Thus, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all institutions of higher education. Therefore, a future phenomenological study could explore the lived experiences of multicultural center directors who work at community colleges in higher education.

I did not disaggregate findings to compare the experiences of directors with support staff (e.g., directors with identity-based centers under their portfolio) vs. directors without support staff (e.g., undergraduate student workers). While this was not the aim of the research study, future research should focus on the impact of support staff and its correlation with morale,

burnout, and employee turnover. A study of this nature might benefit from using organizational theories.

Many of the participants in the study yearned for support from their White colleagues. Therefore, it might be beneficial to conduct a study that explores strategies used by senior administrators to cultivate accountability across their institutions. A study of this nature would be applicable to practitioners seeking to address inequitable workplace environments where People of Color are expected to carry out racial tasks.

Finally, a quantitative study should be conducted that captures the current portfolio of multicultural centers across the United States. As indicated in Chapter 3, the Survey of Multicultural Student Services study was last distributed in 2011. Collecting current data would allow senior leaders the opportunity to ensure that they are utilizing best practices when implementing or reviving a multicultural center on their campus.

Chapter Summary

In this final chapter, I presented the findings of this study which were analyzed through the lens of two theoretical frameworks CRT and TRT. I provided the strengths of the study followed by the limitations. I concluded with the implications for counselor education graduate programs and senior leaders in higher education. Lastly, I presented recommendations for future research. In conclusion, this study explored the lived experiences of 16 multicultural center directors of color in higher education from 12 states within the United States. The study results suggest that higher education institutions continue to hire People of Color to serve in diversity roles without adequate support and guidance. Multicultural center directors perform extensive labor to transform their institutions and the experiences of students whom they serve. However, participants face intentional roadblocks and their advocacy is limited to performative

programming. Participants are conscious of these barriers; however, they feel responsible to support their students and staff because, "if it's not me, then who?" Although some participants in the study pushed back against administration, others were hesitant for fear of being reprimanded and losing their job. Therefore, some multicultural center directors navigated their spaces in ways that further reinforced White Eurocentric values that maintained the status. As a result, I contend that multicultural centers continue to carry out racialized labor for institutions of higher education, and as a result, these tasks reproduce racial hierarchies whereby Whites remain in power, and historically marginalized administrators in higher education remain at the margins.

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Appendix A: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Sherlene Ayala <ayalas2@montclair.edu>

IRB-FY22-23-2772

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Institutional Review Board
School of Nursing & Graduate School Building
Room 333
Office: 973-655-7583
Fax: 973-655-3022

Ms. Sherlene Ayala
Dr. Muninder Ahluwalia
Montclair State University
Department of Counseling
1 Normal Ave.
Montclair, NJ 07043
Re: IRB Number: IRB-FY22-23-2772
Project Title: SS - The Lived Experiences of Multicultural Center Directors of Color

Dear Ms. Ayala and Dr. Ahluwalia:

After a review to federal regulations, 45CFR46, category:

6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Montclair State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this protocol. Your study will require an Administrative Check In (ACD), every two years, updating our office with the status of your research project. Your check in date is November 28, 2024. We will send you a reminder prior to that date. Please note if your study has gone 90 day past the ACD, with no response from the research team it will be administratively closed.

If you are conducting research on campus, check the website for the latest COVID-19 guidance.

All active study documents, such as consent forms, surveys, case histories, etc. , should be generated from the approved Cayuse IRB submission.

When making changes to your research team personnel, you will no longer be required to submit a Modification unless it is to change the PI or PC or if you are about to submit an administrati checkin with an outdated personnel list. If you are changing your study protocol or data collection instruments, you will need to submit a Modification. As Principal Investigator, you are required to make sure all of your Research Team members have appropriate Human Subjects Protections training, prior to working on the study. For more clarification on appropriate training contact th IRB office.

If you are changing your study protocol, study sites or data collection instruments, you will need to submit a Modification.

When you complete your research project you must submit a Project Closure through the Cayuse IRB electronic system.

If you have any questions regarding the IRB requirements, please contact me at 973-655-2097, cayuseIRB@montclair.edu, or the Institutional Review Board.

Sincerely yours,

Dana Levitt
IRB Chair

cc: Ms. Deborah Reynoso, Graduate Student Assistance Coordinator, Graduate School

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer and Accompanying Email

Recruitment Flyer and Accompanying Email / Social Media Language

Are you the Director of a Multicultural Center at a College or University? Do you also identify as a Person of Color?

If so, consider participating in this dissertation study.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of Multicultural Center Directors of Color who work in Higher Education.

PARTICIPANT CRITERIA

- You work for a Multicultural Center that supports college students from several underrepresented identities.
- You self-identify as a Person of Color.
- You serve as the manager of the center (e.g., Director, Associate Director, Assistant Director, Coordinator)
- You have at least 5 years of experience working in higher education.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

- This study will involve two interviews and can happen virtually or in person.
- The first interview is expected to last 60-75 minutes.
- The second interview is expected to last 15 minutes.

Sherlene I. Ayala is a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Counseling at Montclair State University. If you are interested in participating in this dissertation study, or if you have any questions, please contact her at **ayalas2@montclair.edu**. This study has been approved by the Montclair State University Institutional Review Board, MSU IRB #FY22-23-2772.

MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

Recruitment Blurb for Social Media and Listserv Recruitment

<u>Social Media Post</u>

Greetings! My name is Sherlene I. Ayala (she/her/hers), and I am a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Counseling at Montclair State University. I am seeking participants for a research study about the experiences of multicultural center directors, who identify as a person of color. This study will involve two semi-structured interviews hosted either in-person or on Zoom. Interviews will be audio recorded. The audio recording will be transcribed by a transcription service. Transcripts will then be analyzed for themes. Confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology used.

Please see the recruitment flyer attached for eligibility criteria and do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions. This study has been approved by the Montclair State University Institutional Review Board, MSU IRB #FY22-23-2772.

 *Will attach recruitment flyer to social media post

<u>Email Text</u>

Dear _____

My name is Sherlene I. Ayala, and I am a Doctoral Candidate from the Department of Counseling at Montclair State University. I am writing to let you know about an opportunity to participate in a research study about the experiences of multicultural center directors, who identify as a person of color. This study will involve two semi-structured interviews hosted either in person or via Zoom. The interview will take place at a time that is convenient for the participant. During the study, I will audio record the interview, and with permission video record as well. Demographic information will be collected verbally at the time of the interview. You may be eligible to participate if you:

- You work for a Multicultural center that supports college students from underrepresented identities (e.g., race, class, gender, sexual orientation).
- You self-identify as a Person of Color.
- You serve as the manager of the office (e.g., Director, Assistant Director, Coordinator)

If you have any questions, please contact Sherlene I. Ayala at <u>ayalas2@montclair.edu</u> or Dr. Muninder K. Ahluwalia at <u>ahluwaliam@montclair.edu</u>. Thank you for considering participating in this study. This study has been approved by the Montclair State University Institutional Review Board, MSU IRB #FY22-23-2772.

Sincerely,

Sherlene I. Ayala, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Counseling, Montclair State University

Appendix C: Participant Screening Form

Participant Screening Form

Thank you for showing an interest to participate in the following research study - **IRB-FY22-23-2772 - SS - The Lived Experiences of Multicultural Center Directors of Color.** This study is being conducted by Doctoral Student Sherlene I. Ayala at Montclair State University. The PI for this study is Dr. Muninder K. Ahluwalia. The following questions below are intended to ensure that you meet the criteria for participation to the study. Once you complete the responses, you will receive an email about your participation status. Please note that completion of this survey does not mean that you are a participant in the study.

ayalas2@montclair.edu Switch account

* Required

Email *

Your email

This study requires participants to identify as a person of color. How do you identify? *

Your answer

Do you work in a multicultural center on a college/university campus? *

◯ Yes

◯ No

Are you the manager of the multicultural center (ex. Director, Dean, Coordinator, etc.) *

○ Yes

○ No

Do you have 5 years of professional administrative experience in higher education? *

○ Yes

○ No

This study is looking at Multicultural Centers or DEI centers. This also includes cultural *
centers that were founded as a specific type of cultural center (i.e., Black Cultural Center,
Latinx Cultural center, etc.) but has been encouraged or mandated to address the
educational and cultural needs of a broader student demographic on your campus. Does
your center fit this criteria?

○ Yes

○ No

Besides your office, are there any other Multicultural Centers on your campus? If so, what
are the names of those spaces.

Your answer

Do you have a Chief Diversity Officer at your institution? *

○ Yes

○ No

Appendix D: Consent Form

Please read below with care. You can ask questions at any time, now or later. You can talk to other people before you sign this form.

Title: What are the lived experiences of multicultural center directors of color in higher education?
Study Number: IRB# FY22-23-2772

Why is this study being done?
The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of multicultural center directors who self-identify as a Person of Color.

What will happen while you are in the study?
● You will meet with the researcher twice virtually or in person.
● You will receive a copy of the Consent Form and the researcher will go over the research protocol prior to the start of the interview questions.
● You will be informed that the interview will be recorded.
● You will be given the opportunity to provide a pseudonym name.
● You will be given the opportunity to provide a pseudonym name for your institution.
● You will be asked a series of questions related to your experiences. The first time we meet, the interview may take 60-75 minutes. The second time, the interview may take 15 minutes.
● The interview will be recorded. At the end of the interview, the audio recording will be stored on a password-protected device.
● The audio recording will be transcribed. Once the audio recording is transcribed, it will be deleted.
● After your interview is conducted and transcribed, you will receive an Executive Summary that will be used to guide the second interview.

Time: This study consists of an interview and a follow-up interview. The first interview will take about 60-75 minutes. The follow-up interview will take about 15 minutes and participants will be invited to expand on or clarify their responses from the first interview.

Risks: You may experience some discomfort in talking about your work experiences as a Person of Color. Participants who are triggered will be provided with the opportunity to pause for a few minutes during the interview process. Participants can also skip a question at any time, stop the interview, or request to be excluded from the study. In addition, participants will be provided with a listing of professional resources for People of Color.

Data will be collected using the Internet; we anticipate that your participation in this presents no greater risk than everyday use of the Internet. Please note that email communication is neither private nor secure. Though I am taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through email or the

internet could be read by a third party. Furthermore, we strongly recommend that you use a personal device as employers monitor the use of work devices, laptops, Wi-Fi, etc.

Benefits: You may benefit from this study in finding comfort in reading about the shared experiences of other multicultural center directors of color. Institutions of higher education can use the data from this dissertation study to make informed decisions about the implementation of practices and policies that may enhance multicultural centers in higher education.

Compensation: There is no compensation for the time you spend in this study.

Who will know that you are in this study? You will not be linked to any presentations. We will keep who you are confidential and anonymous.

Do you have to be in the study? You do not have to be in this study. You are a volunteer. It is okay if you want to stop at any time and not be included in the study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

If you are an employee of MSU, your employment will not be affected by your participation or non-participation in this study.

Do you have any questions about this study? Email Sherlene Ayala, Doctoral Candidate at ayalas2@montclair.edu. You can also reach out to the Principal Investigator and Faculty Advisor of the study Dr. Muninder K. Ahluwalia at ahluwaliam@montclair.edu

Do you have any questions about your rights as a research participant? Phone or email the IRB Chair, Dr. Dana Levitt, at 973-655-2097 or reviewboard@montclair.edu.

One copy of this consent form is for you to keep.

Statement of Consent
I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement, and possible risks and inconveniences have been explained to my satisfaction. I understand that I can withdraw at any time. My signature also indicates that I am 18 years of age or older and have received a copy of this consent form.

_____   _____   _____
Print your name here   Sign your name here   Date

_____   _____   _____
Name of Principal Investigator   Signature   Date

Appendix E: Participant Signature for Consent Form

Consent Form for IRB FY 22-23-2772

The Lived Experiences of Multicultural Center Directors of Color

ayalas2@montclair.edu (not shared) Switch account

* Required

I reviewed the consent form with Sherlene Ayala, and I: *

◯ Agree to participate in the study

◯ Do not agree to participate in the study

Please type you name below. *

Your answer

Today's Date *

Date

mm/dd/yyyy

Time *

Time

: ___ AM ▾

Appendix F: Interview Protocols

Thank you for taking the time to speak with me today. As discussed via email, the purpose of this interview is to explore the work experiences of multicultural center administrators who self-identify as a Person of Color. This interview will take 60-90 minutes. The interview will include a walk-through of the consent form and semi-structured questions that will guide our discussion. You then will be asked to answer a few demographic information at the conclusion of the interview. This interview will be audio-recorded. Throughout our conversation, I will take handwritten notes as well.

At this time, I would like to read the consent form. (Reads Form Out loud).

Do you have any questions about what I've covered in the consent form? (Participant says Yes or No).

Next, I'd like to allow you the opportunity to choose a pseudonym name that will be used for the study. What name would you like to choose? (Participants choose their preferred name). Thank you.

(If the interview is via Zoom, I will read this sentence out loud)

Now, I'd like to ask that you take a moment to update your name in this HIPAA compliant version of Zoom to your pseudonym name as an extra layer of confidentiality.

Now that I've read the consent form and you've selected a pseudonym name do you allow me to begin recording this interview? (Participant says Yes or No).

Before I begin this interview, I'd like to share that you are welcomed to provide as much or as little detail as you feel comfortable. I may ask additional follow-up questions as we go along. If you would like to stop recording or would like to not answer a particular question at any time, please let me know and we can do so. To begin the interview, please tell me a little bit about yourself, and how you got into multicultural affairs work.

Thank you for sharing that information with me. We will now proceed with the interview questions.

Interview Questions

1. What is the history of the center at your institution?

2. Who do you report to within the organizational chart, and how does that shape your work experiences?

3. Can you describe your experiences with students, faculty, and staff, and how does it impact your work experiences?

4. How would you describe the current campus climate of your institution? How does this impact the work that you do?

5. In what ways does your race/ethnicity influence your role as the director of the center?

6. As the director of a center, what do you wish your colleagues and senior administration knew about your work experiences?

7. What keeps you up at night?

8. If you could reshape the job tasks for this role, what would it be? How does this look different or the same to your current role?

9. In your own words, what are the highs and lows of leading your center?

10. Where is your center located, and how does this impact you?

11. What else, if anything, would you like to share about your work experiences as the director of your center?

Now that you've shared your story with me, can you answer these demographic questions

- What is your ethnicity?

- How long have you worked in Higher Education?

- What is your job title?

- How long have you been in your current position?

- How many students are enrolled at your institution?

- What is the official title of your center?

- Where does your center fall within the organizational chart?

- Please provide a breakdown of your staff members. How many are full time, part-time, graduate students, and student workers?

- What is your Operational Budget excluding employee salaries? Please choose from the options below.

    - 0 - $10,000

    - $10,000 – $40,000

    - $40,001 - $60,000

    - $60,001 - $80,000

    - $80,001 - $100,000

    - $100,001 - $150,000

    - $150,001 - $200,000

    - More than $200,001

Closing the Interview

Thank you so much for sharing your story with me today. I will send you an email in a few weeks with the transcription of our conversation and an executive summary with themes that stood out to me. I ask that you take a few minutes to read the executive summary and provide any additional insights or thoughts on questions that you perhaps would like to expand on. Once you review your summary, I will move on to the second stage and begin data analysis. If I don't hear from you within 10 days after receipt of your executive summary, I will assume you do not have any feedback. At the conclusion of this research study, you will be emailed when the final study is available to review on the Montclair State University dissertation database website.

Further, if you have any colleagues who may be interested to participate in this research study, please have them email me at ayalas2@montclair.edu

Thank you for your time, and I wish you a successful remainder of the academic semester.

Second Interview

Thank you for meeting with me today as a follow up to our interview a few weeks ago. The purpose of this interview is to give you the opportunity to provide any clarifications on the transcription and executive summary provided via email. You may also use this time to share anything that you think it important to know about your experience. To help with conversation, I have three questions for you:

1. Is there anything that you would like to expand on in more depth?

2. Are there any questions that were not answered fully? If so, please expand.

3. Is there anything that you would like to add to the study that is not captured?

Appendix G: Resources for Participants

Resources for Participants

Higher Education Conferences with an Emphasis on Race, Equity, Justice

- NCORE - National Conference on Race and Ethnicity
- ABCC - Conferences for Cultural Centers
- NASPA Multicultural Institute - NASPA Multicultural Institute

Identity-Based Professional Networks

NASPA Knowledge Communities - Identity-based support groups for Higher Education Professionals.

Facebook Pages

- Black Student Affairs Professionals - https://www.facebook.com/groups/blksap/
- Latinx in Student Affairs - https://www.facebook.com/groups/456205131066852/?mibextid=HsNCOg
- African American Knowledge Community of NASPA - https://www.facebook.com/groups/1486327794946166/?mibextid=HsNCOg
- Women of Color in Student Affairs - https://www.facebook.com/groups/668067693254489/
- NASPA Asian Pacific Islander Knowledge Community - https://www.facebook.com/groups/naspaapikc/about

Podcasts

- Student Affairs Now - https://studentaffairsnow.com/
- Therapy for Black Girls - https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/therapy-for-black-girls/id1223803641

Therapy Resources

- Therapy for QPOC
- QTPOC Mental Health Practitioner Directory
- Therapy for Latinx
- Latinx Therapy
- Therapy for Black Girls
- Therapy for Black Men
- Association of Black Psychologists

- Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) Therapist Directory
- South Asian Mental Health Initiative Network
- Therapy for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders
- Indian Health Service Directory
- Inclusive Therapists
- Psychology Today
- Melanin & Mental Health
- Sukhi
- Zencare
- Institute for Muslim Mental Health
- National Jewish Health

Articles/ToolKits

- The Four Bodies: A Holistic Toolkit for Coping with Racial Trauma
- Emotionally Restorative Self-Care for People of Color
- The Road to Resilience
- Self-Care for people of color after emotional and psychological trauma
- 101 Ways to Take Care of Yourself When the World Feels Overwhelming

Online & Quick Interactive Self-Care Activities (most can be done at work)

- Do Nothing Tool
- Self-care Guide
- Self-care Wheel