CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

The Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship (JCAPS) is a social science peer-reviewed journal. It focuses on publishing rigorous, relevant, and respected scholarship related to postsecondary education co-curricular campus activities, and translating such scholarship to practice. It especially encourages submissions from practitioners throughout higher education.

Typical submissions to the journal cover topics such as:

Student and leadership development within campus activities

Programming within a diverse and multicultural campus

Advising students and their organizations

Campus programming, governance, and/or funding boards

Assessing the effects of student involvement in campus activities

Navigating political and legal issues in working with students

Professional development for staff and faculty who work with students

Authors can find more information about the submission process at **naca.org/JCAPS**.

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DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND STUDENT BELONGING IN CAMPUS ACTIVITIES

David Rosch,
Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship Editor in Chief

I have always admired effective bumper stickers. Not nearly every idea can be summarized on a 4" x 12" sticker that can be read from ten feet away, but those that can be, while also revealing a fundamental truth, are particularly powerful. Two of my favorites, adorning my Toyota Tercel hatchback when I was an undergraduate student, stated: "If you're not outraged, you're not paying attention" and "Feminism is the radical notion that women are people." Both are designed to interrupt and invite a better, more accurate way of thinking by calling attention to inequity and injustice.

This is the first-ever Special Issue for the Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship. Since first deciding to release an issue focused on a single topic, our goals have been to capitalize on the global wave of attention on equity and social justice and provide a lens to focus on how this wave can inform our work in campus activities and the scholarship that supports such work. We sent out a broad call for contributions to this special issue and cannot be happier with the result. The JCAPS is in no position to attempt to summarize these articles in fewer than ten words on a sticker, yet they all succeed in interrupting and informing our thinking – and, therefore, our work.

In this Issue, the authors focus on issues of identity to better represent the underrepresented, introduce critical methods designed to disrupt and inform, and provide concrete suggestions to include ALL of our students more comprehensively. We even discuss critical architecture in a thought-provoking article on gender-inclusive restrooms. I, along with the JCAPS Editorial and Advisory Boards, am proud to publish this first Special Issue focused on diversity, equity, inclusion, and student belonging in campus activities. Future special issues will certainly follow, but we are immensely pleased with the result of our inaugural effort. Happy reading!

JCAPS

CAMPUS ACTIVITIES LEADERS AS STEWARDS OF HOPE AND LIBERATION: REFLECTIONS WITH DRS. MAMTA ACCAPADI AND JAN ARMINIO

Mamta Accapadi, Huron Group
Jan Armino, JCAPS Advisory Board

NACA has recently released an updated Research Agenda to support the work of campus activities professionals that includes a more specific focus on and integration of values related to equity, diversity, and inclusion and student belonging. With this update in mind, JCAPS has dedicated this special issue to these topics including:

- How can campus activities professionals cultivate environments which holistically include and support all students – particularly those representing systemically underserved communities?

- How can campus activities professionals move beyond programming that is representative of the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of students to more holistically address the marginalization and oppression experiences by minoritized populations?

- How can campus activities professionals lead and guide efforts to challenge systemic oppression on their campuses?

- How can campus activities professionals respect and affirm the intersecting identities of students?

- In what ways do campus activities professionals negotiate their own identities (from privileged and minoritized lenses) as they support student programming?

Moreover, in a 2022 JCAPS article, Peck et al., posited that in a Venn diagram of the concepts of diversity, inclusion, and equity, their intersection would be sense of belonging. They continued that achieving a sense of belonging of *all* students requires involvement and engagement of *all* students. Beyond the celebratory cultural events campus activities are probably most noted for, they wrote that our profession must engage in the active anti-racist movement, change oppressive structures (e.g., budgets, policies, marketing strategies) and staff behaviors (e.g., mentoring, advising, leadership education) to ultimately ensure 100% engagement. The articles to follow offer insights into how this can be achieved.

To frame and introduce the individual articles to follow, Special Guest Editor Dr. Mamta Accapadi, former Vice President for Student Affairs and currently Higher Education Consulting Director, Huron Group, was interviewed by *JCAPS* Advisory Board member Dr. Jan Arminio.

Jan: Dr. Accapadi, thank you for taking the time to be a part of this Special Edition of *JCAPS*. We appreciate you sharing your expertise and perspective in the ongoing struggle for equity in higher education. Several articles in this issue speak to the importance of recognizing and investigating the needs of intersecting identities (e.g., first generation transfer students) and how physical space plays a role in whether and how students and their intersecting identities can feel they belong at an institution. **What do you think are the ways in which we in campus activities can be more collaborative on our campuses to create more of a sense of belonging among underrepresented students?**

Mamta: It has been so inspiring to see how the functional area of campus activities has evolved over the past two decades. When I think about the experiences that prepared me to become a student affairs educator, those experiences began with the mentorship I received from campus activities staff members and organization advisors. Because of the nature of the work, I find that campus activities educators are among the most collaborative colleagues one can find on a college campus. In many ways, my reflections for how campus activities teams can create a greater sense of belonging apply to our entire profession in student affairs, and frankly, all of higher education. Campus activities colleagues are uniquely positioned to advance students' sense of belonging because of their nuanced understanding of situation, story, and self.

In can be really tempting to take a reductive approach to how we talk about core student matters on college campuses. The first thing that we can all do as educators is reframe the situation. When we talk about creating a sense of belonging, we truly have an opportunity to untether the energy by which we approach this question. Are we asking the question as if we are trying to address a problem? Or are we instead approaching the question with a sense of creation? How we approach the situation, and subsequently the energy we bring to the table, has the power to transform our student experiences and institutions. As such, I think our ability to understand the situation of our work and service to students matters. What central questions can we ask? For example, in Francine Rudd Coston's article on examining first generation transfer students' experiences, and Vigneau, Hillebrand, and Pettigrew's work on all-gender restrooms, the authors respectively consider the institutional situation, and ultimately inspires me to ask myself, "Do I consider the institutional situation, and its differential impact on student populations?" What is our role in shifting the institutional situation- whether the focus is designated spaces, rethinking of processes (for example, how resources are allocated to student groups), or actively reflecting on our programming models.

A big part of being able to reframe the situation is honoring the sacredness of student stories. The consistent story of our students is that that they all bring a form of hope for a better and brighter future for themselves and their families. And that hope is often sitting under layers of experiences - triumphs, traumas, celebrations, grief, and so much more. We may never know what our students are carrying when we meet them, but we do have the ability to be present and open to their sacred stories. The way in which our campus activities colleagues steward the sacred stories of our students not only sets an example for our students, it also elevates the often untold stories and lived experiences of different student communities, and this practice creates a culture for a sense of belonging. We see this perspective thoughtfully raised in Womble's article, "Agency – A Key Driver of Students with Minoritized Identities into Student Activities Leadership," in which the author highlights the factors that influence how and why students engage. How do we celebrate the students who work full time while pursuing their education? How do we publicly recognize the work that students from specific communities do to care for one another? The ways in which we recognize student leaders, how we define leadership, and expand recognition of our students' life journeys can have a big impact on cultivating a sense of belonging. In these ways, we honor the sacredness of their stories.

Finally, the most meaningful way to consider situation and story is for us to take a deep and loving look at our 'self.' I cannot think of a single student who has reflected on their time in college and said, "Gosh that workshop just changed my life!" Instead, they look back and remember their mentors - people like us. So, the self we bring to our campus is the most powerful tool we have to create a sense of belonging. I think the article, "This is Bigger than Me: Why Black Women Create Inclusive Environments in Predominantly White Campuses" by Neale, highlighting the ways that Black Women VPSAs draw from their identities to elevate empathy, understanding and care, is one such example of why we need to consider the 'self' we bring. In what ways are we accessible to students to understand their situation and stories? In what ways might we present barriers? Campus activities educators are often the first tier of mentors that students seek, especially when the remainder of their academic experience may feel daunting or intimidating. How do we engage our most loving 'self' to not just create a sense of belonging, but a space where students feel affinity, affection, and hope?

Jan: The articles in this Issue reveal that to accomplish the reality that all students feel they belong to our institutions, further work must occur on individual, organizational, and institutional levels. How do and how should

campus activities leaders encourage and make opportunities for the learning, unlearning, and relearning that this shift will require? Of course, this includes our own relearning. **What do you believe are some of the things that our field needs to "unlearn" about our work, and how might we "relearn" that work to become more effective with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion?**

Mamta: Our profession has the opportunity to elevate student learning. I don't think in terms of learning or unlearning, because we are all on a journey together. One wish I have for our profession is for us to leverage our gifts in a more integrated manner. Because we are often known for being gifted tacticians on our campuses, we find comfort and purpose in filling those roles. We have a program for everything. It is tangible. We can point to our contributions easily. We feel a sense of agency and purpose. I wish we could take this gift and apply it to leading at an institutional level. Instead of 'doing more things and creating more programs' I wish we could 'convene more communities of practice.'

Now, you may think I am not answering the question you asked. I think in any kind of work, and especially diversity, equity, inclusion work, our instinct is to "perform the work," as pointed out in Sasso and Marcy's article "Saying the Right Thing, Doing the White Thing: Perpetuating the Enlightenment Narrative in White Undergraduate Student Leaders." While that article is a study of white student leaders, I think it could have universal application for all of us. As a woman of color with many privileged identities, this article made me think deeply about how I try to 'say the right thing' without deeper reflection on how I can actually be a change agent in my own privileged identity. How often do I try to look good, by saying the right thing, as a cisgender woman? How can I actually be vulnerable and courageous to the self-work so I can be a tool for inclusion, transformation, and liberation?

In short, I think we need to trust our talents and remember the wisdom we bring to our communities. This requires us shifting our perception on where the 'work' sits. We know how to do the work, I think we need to think about how we free ourselves energetically to be the work – the work of reflection and self-awareness, convening courageous conversations and ultimately personal freedom.

Jan: Several articles speak to the importance of beginning the higher education experience in a way that all students feel they belong, particularly those who have been marginalized. **How do you think current higher education orientation programs and student advising get that right or miss the mark?**

Mamta: The way in which we welcome our students, especially our systemically minoritized students, to our campus communities matters. I think the most meaningful way we can situate our students for wholeness and success is by demystifying the academic journey. I remember attending my new student orientation session, and the VP at the time said to us, "Look to the left, and look to the right. One of you will not be here at graduation." I think about that moment from thirty years ago, and it breaks my heart. I know our profession has changed, and the words we use have changed, but it takes time for that kind of culture to change. Have our structures and processes changed to center the sacredness of students, or do we still operate with the mindset that 'one of you won't be here?'

We have an opportunity to think about orientation programs and advising as experiences vs. programs. I think we miss the mark when we live in our silos and when we fail to operate with a shared set of values around student dignity and care. If I lead an orientation program, then I am motivated to think about the delivery and logistics of the program. Typically, that covers the 'who, what, when, and where' of the work. If I see myself as the facilitator of an orientation experience, I might also consider the situation and sacredness of the students. This consideration means I am also thinking about the 'why and how' of the work. Can a student-parent, a student who uses a wheelchair, a genderqueer student, and a student of color all access this experience with wholeness? Similarly, related to academic advising, how do we engage in holistic advising that moves beyond a graduation checklist, and where advising conversations can focus on more than just academic success? How should an academic advisor consider the overall condition of our students?

I think critics might say that what I am offering may be unsustainable because it requires slowing down our processes, and given the understaffing and underfunding of our areas, this reflection may feel overwhelming. This feeling is very real. What if we let go of our nostalgia of how we experienced campus activities? What if we were more generalist in nature? What if campus activities units were situated as a campus facilitator of student dignity and wholeness? Imagine if academic advisors identified a need for creating affinity groups for specific populations. Now imagine us as partners in advancing that kind of work in a way that created a sense of belonging, advanced the academic mission of our institutions, and centered student needs? I think we could align our work with more attention to a student success mission and embrace a radical change in what our work looks like.

Jan: The on-going problem of uninformed students, faculty, and staff making comments that reveal assumptions of the superiority of the white dominant culture and inferiority of other cultures is highlighted in several articles. **Is higher education making progress in this regard, or are we slipping backward?**

Mamta: I certainly do not have the ability to discern whether higher education is making progress or slipping backward related to how we engage race on our campuses. Higher education is one tiny and privileged part of our society overall. This is a societal issue, and it continues to get more and more complex. I think we need to stay in the complexity.

Honestly, now could be the time any one of us might want to give up. The exhaustion is real. And this is exactly the time we need to reach deep into the abundance within our souls to be present and active - especially in our privileged identities. When I see different forms of anti-LGBT legislation, this is the time I need to be even more active and move beyond 'saying the right thing,' and think about what my privileged identities allow me to do and be. In our privileged identities, we want instant gratification for our 'good work' so we can feel better about ourselves. I don't get to opt out of the uncomfortable conversation with family members over holiday gatherings because they are tiring for me. In our privileged identities, we tend to diagnose others who are not as 'evolved' as we think we are, and then we distance ourselves from those folks, thinking that this is some form of activism.

Our society is unravelling because we are less and less present with each other. Oppression is real. Violence toward systemically minoritized communities is real. A structure of systemic oppression that took centuries to create will not be dismantled with our opting in and out of our responsibility for social change at our convenience. We need to be sustainable, but ever present, in our dominant identity spaces. And we need to be present with an abundance of love. Our diagnosing and distancing of others who may engage in active behaviors of identity-based superiority is often an internal management of shame that we feel around our privileged identities. So let's just be honest about that, and name it. And when we name it, we can do something about it.

We are in a moment in which many people with dominant identities are reacting to a deeper set of reflections situated in self-perceptions of goodness. If I have a dominant identity, I must be bad, and I feel shame. So, to counter that thought progression, it is easier for me to say that my identity is not actually dominant; therefore, everything else is not valid. It protects me from feeling shame. And I then engage in all of the activities, legislation, school board decisions reviewing curriculum, etc., to get rid of all of the content that makes me feel shame. How can we as educators recognize this very human dynamic within ourselves and our students? When we experience this dynamic, the response has to be an abundance of love and presence. We can be loving and present, while also having accountability. Right now, in our dominant identities, when we step out of this work, we create a default environment where our colleagues with systemically minoritized identities are expected to carry the burden. I think, right now, we need to continue to pay attention and figure out how we hold onto each other.

Jan: As we will read in the subsequent pieces, because learning assumes some challenge or dissonance, balancing new learning while promoting a sense of belonging demands trust and vulnerability. **What suggestions do you have for campus activities professionals to show more vulnerability while also presenting a professional persona on campus?**

Mamta: Honestly, I am a little biased here. I think overall as a collective, campus activities professionals are

deeply skilled in building trust and modeling vulnerability. I think where we can strengthen our approach is by making sure our teams are diverse and inclusive, and that all of our colleagues feel whole within our teams.

Campus activities colleagues could take the opportunity to regularly assess themselves as individuals and as organizations. How do our colleagues at the counseling center, in academic advising, involved in faculty governance experience us? Do we know? I think building trust and credibility goes a long way across campus. Taking the time to demonstrate to other functional areas that we value and understand their contribution to the student experience is probably one of the best investments in relationships we can make.

When we take the time to center the sacredness of others, we maximize the opportunities for mutual understanding. This isn't to say that this process always works, or the climate allows us to engage in this manner. Our campuses come with unique sets of politics, personalities, and cultures. As such, the tension between presenting with vulnerability while also presenting a professional persona almost assumes that these two concepts are oppositional, and they aren't. Vulnerability doesn't mean to bring all of your baggage to the table and expect others to pick it up. Vulnerability means owning, loving, and holding yourself accountable for that story. Imperfect people may judge presentations of vulnerability based on their own internalized definitions of professionalism, and this can be very difficult and painful. So, I don't know if I have advice, but I certainly have deep love, affection, and respect for my colleagues who lead with vulnerability because this requires so much courage.

Jan: Technology is providing ever more ways to share stories. How might institutional context (i.e., history, type, geography, [white] traditions) influence this story telling? **What are the types of stories that you have told and are trying to tell to positively influence diversity, equity, and inclusion in places where you have worked?**

Mamta: I come from a culture of story-telling. For a long time, I refrained from telling my own story, because it felt self-centered to me. In my own culture, and more specifically the way I was raised, women were expected to be demure, quiet, and basically invisible - as markers of good, dutiful, daughters. That message, spanning many generations, is part of my DNA. I hear it every morning. So, when I started telling my story, I told it from a generational lens, and from the perspective of the women of my family. What is the generational story I can tell and what transformation can I see across the span of multiple generations?

We are in the work of social change, so our hearts and spirits are in the right place. We are also in a time where the wash, rinse, repeat cycle of react to incident and demonstrate change limits us from seeing a longer arc of our stories. I think the generational stories we tell remind us that we are both very insignificant, and yet SO significant in the story of social change. My individual participation in a protest, in the grand scheme, may be insignificant, but the tiny change that emerged from a series of protests that people like you and me participate in, has significance in influencing changes of practices.

I try to bring untold stories to my communities, of course respecting the agency and consent of our students. On many campuses, for example, we have not paid attention to the lives of military veteran students and their families. At one campus, I had a student who left to become a movie star in the Indian film industry - literally the largest film industry in the world - but no one knew this on that campus. I also love telling stories of generational hope. So many of our students are surviving on the hope of their loved ones, and that story needs to be told. The purpose of story-telling, to me, is to remind all of us that there is a universality of hope in all of our lived experiences, and that we are not alone. The beauty of campus activities professionals is that we are often the first curators of these stories.

JCAPS

"THIS IS BIGGER THAN ME:" WHY BLACK WOMEN CREATE INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS ON PREDOMINANTLY WHITE CAMPUSES

Brandi R. Neal, University of Southern Indiana

Using the Applied Critical Leadership (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012) framework to operationalize leadership and to celebrate the ways in which Black women Vice Presidents of Student Affairs (VPSAs) acquire institutional access to create real change, this study sought to identify what motivates Black Women to engage in creating supporting environments on their predominantly White campuses. Twelve semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted with six participants from varying post-secondary institutions. Through qualitative data analysis, the theme This is Bigger Than Me emerged to validate participants' understandings of their own identities when it comes to creating welcoming environments for racially minoritized students.

> *"The proper education of any people includes sympathetic touch between teacher and pupil; knowledge of the part of the teacher, not simply of the individual taught, but of his surroundings and background, and the history of his class and group; such contact between pupils and between teacher and pupil on the basis of perfect social equality will increase this sympathy and knowledge."*
> -W.E.B. Du Bois

Higher education institutions are viewed as being strong advocates for diversity and equity through the development of research, curricular and co-curricular programs, initiatives, student recruitment and retention efforts, and policies. Although these kinds of initiatives may aim to diversify the student body, challenges related to feelings of seclusion, academic isolation, and overall lack of satisfaction with the undergraduate experience among racially minoritized students (RMS) have been reported— particularly at elite, selective, research-intensive predominantly White institutions (Reynolds, Sneva, & Beechler, 2010). These challenges raise important questions surrounding retention and student development on these predominantly White campuses.

Before COVID-19 swept the nation, colleges and universities around the United States were enrolling a growing number of racially minoritized students. Since then, COVID-19 has continued to highlight the preexisting structural inequities that disproportionately impact families and students from racially minoritized backgrounds. Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on enrollment is crucial when universities continue to place recruitment and retention at the top of their list of most pressing issues. "Students of color now make up 45% of the undergraduate population, compared with less than 30% two decades ago" (Brown, 2019). Despite these changing student demographics, "faculty and administrators at predominantly White institutions lack awareness of the special emotional challenges that racially minoritized students face" (González-Prendes & Thomas, 2011; Grier-Reed, Arcinue, & Inman, 2015; Hannon, Woodside, Pollard, & Roman, 2016; Henry, Butler, & West, 2011-2012; McCorkle, 2012 as cited in Robertson & Dundes, 2017, p. 1). The effects of the pandemic are not playing out equitably, and institutions must take into consideration the myriad of inequities racially minoritized students are faced with to recruit and retain this vulnerable population.

With the increase of RMS and the constant change of demographics in higher education, the experiences of RMS continue to remain relevant, particularly as they relate to campus racial climate. Student affairs administrators, particularly Vice Presidents of Student Affairs (VPSAs), have a significant responsibility to provide a campus

culture that creates, cultivates, and nurtures students' sense of belonging in and outside of the classroom. I argue that their role is important in creating a culturally engaging environment that is inclusive of diverse students through their departmental policies, interactions with students, and co-curricular programming. This study situates VPSAs at the center of analysis to gain better insight into how the field of student affairs plays a critical role in the development and growth of undergraduate students outside of the classroom.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study was conducted to examine how Black women VPSAs' understandings of their identity contribute to their motivation for creating an inclusive environment for racially minoritized students. To clarify the relationship between key concepts, a conceptual model was developed. The model is centered around Black women VPSAs due to several influences their position has on key concepts presented in the study. Positioned above the Black women VPSAs directly influencing their work is the theoretical framework. In this particular study, the Applied Critical Leadership (Santamaría& Santamaría, 2012) framework situates the Black women VPSAs at the forefront to confront and transform educational spaces. The VPSAs consider the social context of their educational communies (PWIs) to enact change based on their identities.

The ACL model was used to explain how these women address issues of social justice, educational equity, and educational change through their intersecting identities and past experiences. Moreover, I argue that Black women VPSAs' social identities allow them to see alternative perspectives that aid in disrupting social barriers that hinder student belonging. In the model, positioned around Black women VPSAs, are PWIs, RMS, and student affairs offices. These three contexts are directly influenced by Black women VPSAs. In addition to Black women VPSAs directly influencing these three contexts, the contexts show a relation with one another. For example, the model shows the relationship between PWIs and RMS on one side, and on the other, it demonstrates the relationship between RMS and student affairs offices. According to O'Keeffe (2013), student affairs offices such as women's centers, multicultural services, counseling services, Greek life, and campus activities (sometimes referred to as student development) can also contribute to the sense of belonging and retention rates for RMS. Using both the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, I view Black women VPSAs as having a direct impact on PWIs, student affairs offices, and RMS through their leadership practices and intersecting racial and gendered identities. The factors represented in the model individually and collectively contribute to the understanding of the direct influence Black women VPSAs have on various aspects of the campus climate.

Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework*
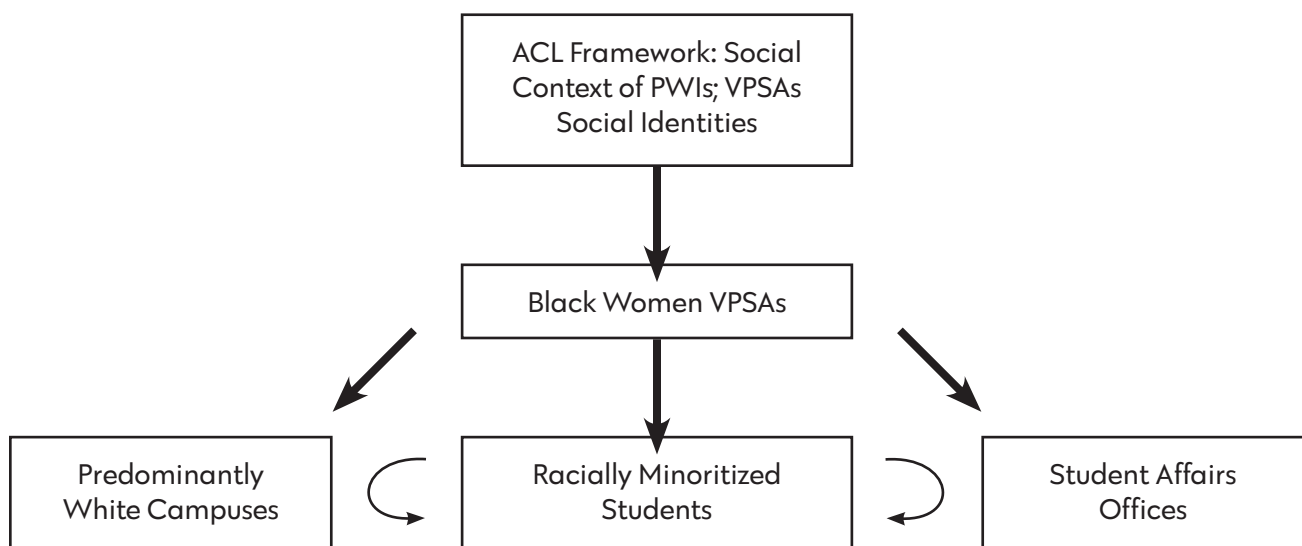
LITERATURE REVIEW

The Importance of Black Women in Leadership

Few research studies have focused on Black Women administrators and the ways in which they lead. Rather, studies have focused on the underrepresentation (Flowers, 2003; Harper, 2005; and Townsend, 2021), isolation (Patitu, 2003; Gregory, 2001; and Willis, et al., 2019), and marginalization (Bazner, 2021; Lloyd-Jones, 2014; and Mitchell, et al., 2014) of Black Women in higher education. Limited research also discusses the experiences of Black Women administrators at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), while rarely highlighting their experiences in a positive light at predominantly White institutions. For the purpose of this study, the literature review will discuss the relationships Black Women administrators create with racially minoritized students to provide an alternative narrative to the existing literature surrounding Black Women administrators and their experiences in higher education. It is often cited in research that racially minoritized students, many of whom are the first in their family to attend a college or university, typically struggle with academic performance and higher attrition rates than other students (Dennis, Phinney, & Chuateco, 2005, Green and Wright, 2017; Jackson, et al., 2013; and Kinzie, et al., 2008). Thus, it is important to explore what types of relationships promote success among such students.

The college experiences of RMS are influenced by a variety of factors such as academic support (Sherman, Giles, Williams-Green, 1994; Flowers, 2004; and Hoyt, 2021), financial support (Townsend, 1994), and social support (Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso, 2000). The interactions between students and university personnel influence student experiences, thus, students, particularly racially minoritized students rely on faculty and staff for socioemotional support such as understanding and sympathy (Davis, 1991). Davis (1991) states, "On historically White campuses, Black students have fewer significant others with whom to form meaningful interpersonal relationships." Davis (1991) goes on to argue basic social needs (such as esteem or approval) are gratified through interaction with faculty and staff who identify themselves as caring and supportive.

Hirt and colleagues (2006) conducted a study that examined the work of student affairs administrators at HBCUs. Although not a part of their initial curiosity, Hirt and colleagues found that participants in their study were committed to giving back through the racial uplift of their students. Administrators in the study discussed the importance of racial uplift because it allowed them to create relationships with students and empower students from racially minoritized backgrounds. Hirt, Amelink, McFeeters, and Strayhorn (2008) also found that Black Women administrators engaged in a system of othermothering, a cross-familial pattern of care that is often found in the Black community. This study examined relationships between administrators and students at one HBCU, demonstrating the significance of facilitating student belonging and retention. Less is known about the nature of relationships between Black Women administrators and racially minoritized students at PWIs. Although examining the relationships between Black Women administrators and RMS was an indirect variable of the study, it is important to provide a foundation to then discuss why Black Women administrators engage in the work they do.

I argue that Black Women hold the knowledge and potentially the experiences to be capable of working with racially minoritized students because they deeply understand their students' situations and needs inside and outside of the classroom. Participants drew on intersecting identities, past experiences, and understandings of diverse groups to enact change with equity as the basis of their leadership. Through a Critical Race Theory lens, individuals who practice ACL use stories of people of color to explore identity. As others have documented, there is added value in the stories and narrative accounts educational leaders of color, women in particular, share about the ways in which they lead, which are qualitatively different from historically mainstream leadership practices (Ah Nee-Benham & Cooper, 1998; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Jean-Marie, 2010; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Applied Critical Leadership (ACL) is a "strengths-based model of leadership practice where educational leaders consider the social context of their educational communities and empower individual members of these communities based on educational leaders' identities as perceived through critical race theory (CRT) or another

critical lens" (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012, p. 5). The Applied Critical Leadership theory framework provides a means to consider multiple perspectives that encompass the intersectionality of the participants. Applied Critical Leadership employs three different stages (transformative leadership, critical multiculturalism, and Critical Race Theory; CRT). The theoretical model draws upon positive attributes of a leader's identity to ask: "In what ways does my identity enhance my ability to see alternate perspectives and practice effective leadership" (Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012, p. 8). Addressing questions like the one above provides a foundation for a different leadership approach in terms of addressing issues of social justice, educational equity, and educational change.

Leaders who employ the ACL model use CRT at the critical multiculturalism and transformative leadership phase to explore their identity with an emphasis on race. CRT examines race and racism across dominant cultures by examining how these dominant cultures perpetuate systematic racism. Individuals who practice CRT attempt to understand how these spaces are affected by cultural perceptions of race, as well as how to represent themselves in these spaces.

Tichy and Ulrich (2008) define transformational leadership as "bringing about fundamental changes in the organization's basic political and cultural systems" (p. 1). Leaders who adopt a transformational leadership framework create new practices from old ones that challenge the organization's current structures. McDowell and Fang (2007) refer to critical multiculturalism as a "perspective that values diversity and acknowledges the politics of cultural differences and social location" (p. 551). Critical multiculturalism draws from multicultural, critical, and feminist discourses to support racial, ethnic, and cultural equity in relation to identity politics and social location (McDowell & Fang, 2007). In this phase of ACL, the language, culture, and experiences of leaders explicitly impact praxis.

For this study, the ACL framework is used to operationalize leadership in a way that challenges the status quo. Few scholars have looked at what it means to conceptualize leadership from a framework that addresses an individual's multiple intersecting identities and characteristics. As an alternative, ACL positions critical leaders at the forefront to confront and transform spaces through various behaviors and practices, given their understanding of their identities.

POSITIONALITY

I realize that my role as a Black Woman who has a passion for wanting racially minoritized students to thrive in higher education may potentially create bias in my interpretation of the data. During my college career, I only attended both large and small predominantly White institutions. My undergraduate experience had a significant influence on my interest in student affairs. While my undergraduate institution was a small public institution consisting of mostly White students, faculty, and administrators, I often wondered why no one looked like me. If they did look like me, the individuals did not hold tenured faculty positions or senior-level administrative positions. I was heavily involved as an undergraduate student in co-creating an organization, holding administrative positions (VP, secretary, and treasurer), studying abroad, and volunteering. At the time, my knowledge of student affairs and what it entails was minimal. Through an internship and various opportunities, I have been able to gain experience and knowledge about the field of student affairs. These experiences furthered my passion for wanting racially minoritized students to succeed on predominantly White campuses. My engagement with various student affairs administrators left me wanting more. I was motivated to pursue this study for a number of reasons: (a) the role that my mentor played in my undergraduate career and beyond; (b) during my college experience, no one I encountered at a senior-level position looked like me; and (c) my culture, my identity, my values, and beliefs are instilled in everything I do. Learning how women who share some of the same identities as myself create inclusive and supportive environments for racially minoritized students is crucial to my personal and professional development.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to examine how Black Women VPSAs' understandings of their identity contribute to their motivation to create an inclusive environment for racially minoritized students. Since VPSAs oversee

departments and units that are crucial to student development outside of the classroom, it is important for co-curricular activities to contribute to the engagement, sense of belonging, and retention of students. Specifically, these spaces are vital for RMS due to the cited research on RMS feeling isolated on predominantly White campuses. Although there is extensive research on the importance of symbolic representation, few studies focus on Black Women VPSAs and their impact on the campus environment.

This study focuses on the role of VPSAs for three reasons: (a) a core concept of student affairs is to encourage, understand, and respect diversity, which is ironic given the lack of diversity in VPSA positions across predominantly White institutions; (b) the impact this position has on the student body and campus climates at PWIs; and (c) diversifying senior-level student affairs positions can contribute to the sense of belonging for underrepresented students. The following research question guided this study: In what ways do Black women VPSAs' understandings of their own identity contribute to their motivation to intentionally create a welcoming environment for racially minoritized students?

METHODS

Institutional Sample

The current analysis draws from six institutions that vary in institutional size, location, selectivity, and Carnegie classification within the United States. Site selection was based on self-nomination due to participant criteria, in turn making the site selection convenient. In addition to convenience, the sites represented in the sample present uniqueness in terms of urbanicity, location, and recruitment areas for the institutions. Of the six institutions represented in the data, four of them are in the Midwest. A variety of institutions are represented in the data, including public, private, Christian, and not-for-profit. All institutions represented in the sample are 4-year predominantly White institutions with pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the institutions used in the sample.

Participant Sample

Participants came from a variety of backgrounds, including educational attainment, career trajectory, upbringing, etc. The median age for participants was 48, with ten or more years of experience in higher education administration. Although it was not a requirement to hold an advanced degree while in the VPSA position, all six participants held a Ph.D. or Ed.D. The number of years in their current position ranged from 6 months to 6 years at the time the data were collected. A stipulation for the time in current position was not placed on the criteria to participate due to wanting to capture a range of experiences. Participants who held their positions for less than six months also have served in various student affairs positions at a previous institution or their current institution. Destiny (pseudonym), the first participant, held a Ph.D. in Higher Education and has served as the Vice President of Student Affairs at her current institution for less than one year. Prior to this position, she held the same position at a different institution for two years. Melanie received her Ph.D. in Educational Administration and has between 10-15 years of experience in higher education. Both Faith and Irene held an Ed.D. in Adult Education, with at least 15 years of experience in Higher Education Administration. Yolanda possessed over 25 years of experience in Higher Education Administration and had previously served as Vice Provost for Student Affairs and Dean of Students at a previous institution. Whitney, the VPSA at Turquoise University, had more than 25 years of experience in higher education with a Ph.D. in higher education. It was common for persons who held the Vice President of Student Affairs position to have previously worked as Dean of Students and/or Title IX Directors/Coordinators, providing them with years of experience and preparation for the position of VPSA.

Data Collection

Data for the study were collected in both the late fall and early spring of 2019. Data were collected through audio-recorded interviews and demographic questionnaires. The demographic makeup of the participants was collected after participants signed the informed consent. The demographic questionnaire consisted of questions related to age, educational attainment, number of years in their current leadership position, number of years of experience in higher education, and more.

Once participants completed the demographic questionnaire, the next set of data were collected through two

semi-structured interviews. Each interview ranged from 45 to 90 minutes. A total of 12 interviews were conducted among the six participants. Of the 12 interviews, eight were conducted via Zoom, while the other four were conducted in person. In these semi-structured interviews, participants had the opportunity to share in-depth experiences of their time serving in a senior-level leadership position in higher education, what type of leadership models, if any, they employed while in their current roles, the role their intersecting identities played while leading in a multicultural environment, and more.

Analysis

The current study employed several phases of data analysis. The first portion of data analysis consisted of transcribing interviews. Interviews were transcribed through an online transcribing software. Once interviews were transcribed, the researcher listened to the recording while reading the transcripts to (a) ensure that the data was transcribed correctly and (b) to immerse themselves in the data more. By listening to the recording and reading the transcripts, the researcher was able to refocus their attention on the data rather than listening to transcribe. Also, listening to the audio while reading the transcripts allowed the researcher to reflect on any overarching generalities about the individual interview data and document them in the margins of the transcript (Creswell, 2014) before comparing the interviews to one another.

A series of coding techniques were used in the data analysis phase to ensure rich data emerged from the set. MAXQDA, a qualitative and mixed method data analysis tool, was used to keep track of codes and sub-codes. Open coding is the first stage in constant comparative analysis. In this stage of coding, the researcher tried to capture what was going on in the data in a very broad sense. If statements or expressions were repeated more than twice, they became a code in level one. Bazely (2013) states that

> the tendency of people to repeat themselves has three implications for coding: if you miss something important, it will come up again; repeated words or ideas point to concepts that should be coded; and variations in the use of a word or phrase provide an opportunity for comparison. (p. 167)

In addition to coding repeated words or phrases, in-vivo coding was used as a form of analysis to ensure participants' experiences were kept at the forefront of the research. In-vivo coding uses "words or phrases by participants as labels for codes to capture the essence of what participants are saying in their own terms" (Bazely, 2013, p. 166). In response to the study's research question, one *a priori* code (identity) was also included in the coding phase. Process coding was used to denote any action taken by the participants. This type of code was extremely useful when denoting the behaviors and practices participants engaged in. Once all initial codes from level one coding were derived, over 40 codes emerged from the data between the first round of transcripts. Level two coding allowed the researcher to constantly compare level one codes and collapse them into smaller clusters and subcodes; therefore, level two coding had a total of 15 codes. Level two coding is often referred to as focused coding (Saldaña, 2009). In level two coding, similar codes were combined to see new connections and alternative ways of interpreting the text. A codebook was developed within MAXQDA to assign definitions to each code. As a result of level one and level two coding, two themes emerged from the data. To derive the themes found in the data, patterns and trends that related to the research questions were noted. In the final reporting of data, narratives from Black Women based on the proposed research question are represented. Additionally, elements of Applied Critical Leadership are reported throughout the findings.

FINDINGS

Theme: "This is Bigger Than Me"

The saying, "this is bigger than me," is seen as a humble acknowledgment that recognizes the work that people do to help someone else. This specific theme speaks to the research question: In what ways do Black women VPSAs' understandings of their own identity contribute to their motivation to intentionally create a welcoming environment for racially minoritized students? Between a combination of life, work, intersectional identities, and collegiate experiences, participants alluded to what contributes to their motivation to create welcoming environments for RMS.

Upbringing

Various participants expressed that at an early age, their upbringings impacted their decisions to engage in this line of work. Both Irene and Faith addressed who they were raised around and what they were raised to do contributed to their understanding of motivation. For example, participants were asked how self-identified descriptors play a role in their lives. Faith described herself as a seasoned Black Woman, mother, wife, grandmother, educator, community activist, and spiritual guide. When asked how these descriptors play a role in her life, Faith answered:

> Most of them are my foundation, who I am and where I come from. I think because I was raised in a strong community. Everything that I have named that is a part of me is what I saw. And so, that is a part of my DNA, and who I am as a person today. There's no doubt about it.

When asked what she attributes her success to in terms of diversity and inclusion, Irene answered:

> I attribute it to the way I was raised. I would attribute it to my mother and my grandfather. My grandfather and my mom were part of the Civil Rights Movement, but we've all achieved various things. It was ingrained in us when we were kids. I also think it has a lot to do with my background. My dad is biracial. So, my grandmother was White. I think that's just part of who I am and the way I was raised. So, it came long before I arrived here at my current institution. Even when I worked in corporate, I used to serve on the corporate diversity committee, so it has always been a part of me.

Faith and Irene both draw upon their social identities and their familial upbringings to support their understandings of critical multiculturalism, where language, culture, and experiences directly impact praxis. The critical multiculturalism perspective offers a deeper insight into how participants draw on their cultural experiences to inform their leadership practices. Through this phase of ACL, critical multiculturalism supports racial, ethnic, and cultural equity in relation to identity politics and social location. Given their beliefs of familial upbringing, both Faith and Irene understand the politics of cultural differences and social location impact their motivation to intentionally create welcoming environments for racially minoritized students.

Lived Experiences

In addition to their upbringing, participants' lived experiences also contributed to their motivation. Half of the participants are at least 60 years of age, while the other half of the participants range between 30-49. Although there is an age difference represented in the sample, there are a wide array of lived experiences that each participant discussed. Some of these experiences include their own collegiate involvements, encounters with racism, and their parental guidance.

Destiny is of Jamaican descent and moved to the United States over 20 years ago. She drew on her experiences of bigotry and racism to inform the work she does with students. Because she has experienced some of the same things that her students are currently navigating, she draws on her personal experiences as motivation to disrupt the status quo.

> I won't go with a standard because I'm Black, so I get it because I'm a firm believer that not all skin folk are kinfolk. Like, not all our experiences because we look alike are the same. My intersectionality is all over the place. I'm an international student. I'm a first-generation college student. I'm Black. I'm a Black presenting woman, who people think I'm automatically African American, and I'm not. There are all these other layers that intersect to make me who I am and inform the work that I do. So, I feel my lived experiences when it comes to being marginalized or encountering racism, or encountering bigotry in different situations does help me to navigate a conversation with a student who may be going through something.

When asked how often she draws on her lived experiences to advocate for RMS, Faith answered:
> Oh, probably two, three times a day. If not more. I'm their voice. Sometimes that's how policies are written. When you get to this level and when you're sitting at this table, you're making policies, and you have got to remember who you work for. I don't work for anybody but students. So, I most definitely have to think about who I work for, my personal experiences, and how those affect a future.

In transformational leadership, a component of ACL, leaders address fundamental changes in their institution's political and cultural systems. Leaders who employ transformational leadership create new practices that challenge the institution's current structure. Historically, policies, practices, and institutional culture have ostracized racially minoritized students to the extent they are isolated and ignored. The participants of the study drew upon their lived experiences to enact change with equity as the basis of their leadership. Given their lived experiences, participants could answer the central question of Applied Critical Leadership, "In what ways does my identity enhance my ability to see alternate perspectives and practice effective leadership" (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012, p.8).

Collegiate Experience

Both Irene and Faith attended HBCUs for their undergraduate experiences. Though HBCUs primarily serve African Americans, their student population is academically, financially, racially, and socially diverse. HBCUs foster a unique set of competencies along with "traditional" learning experiences. Both participants' practices are informed by the HBCU model to engage in work with racially minoritized students. When asked what types of experiences she brings to advocate for RMS, Irene describes her undergraduate experience at her alma mater, stating:

> The other thing that is interesting is that I attended a Historically Black College. So that frame of reference has helped me because I don't know how to feel inferior to White people. I have no concept of that. What I often do is teach my students how to advocate for themselves and how to honor the fact that regardless of how they are paying for tuition, their money covers our salaries. So, there's an expectation that we need to meet as a staff and a university.

When asked that same question, Melanie replied:

> I would say that my HBCU experience definitely shaped me. I attended an HBCU, and that was a critical experience for me in terms of the way that I think about my approach to students. The way that I want students to feel and the importance of being celebrated for who you are and all of your kind of many and multiple identities. I don't just see it from the lens of, like, someone who grew up middle-class with a fair amount of privilege. I do see it from a different perspective, one that I can't say of my own or that I know intimately, but I still have very much been exposed to that space.

Although Destiny did not attend an HBCU, she attributes her understanding to her post-secondary experience as an international student.

> Having experiences throughout those two years that exposed me to this feeling and the importance of someone like myself being a woman of color, being in the field and the impact that I can have on other lives. I believe our lives are not for us to just live. It's to impact those around us.

Irene describes her college experience as a commuter student as something she draws from to guide her work with students.

> I would go back to I was a student myself. I had to pay my own way through college. So, I use my life experience to kind of direct what I'm doing. And so, then the other distinction with me was we had financial aid, but the expected family contribution came from me. I worked full-time. I was a commuter, I only lived on campus for a short time. So, I've been the unique student. Those are the experiences I draw from, but I also realize that things are a lot different. I like the engagement that I have with students; it helps me to navigate my professional life. I also really pay attention, listen, and draw from my younger staff.

Identity

Participants acknowledged their identity as an understanding that contributes to their motivation. Although it is often strenuous to synthesize and navigate intersecting identities, the VPSAs in the study shared how their identity informs the work they do with RMS and how these understandings motivate them to engage in creating welcoming environments. Destiny finds that her identity informs the work that she does with all students.

> I feel my identity is ingrained in how I view all things. That is my cultural capital. That's my background. I use my identity to inform the way I engage with students, regardless if they're students who are presenting in a cultural way that mirrors mine or not. Because again, I feel that there are so many misunderstandings

around race, ethnicity, gender, and those relations. So, for me it's disrupting that and standing firm in that. It's also important for me to support and be confident in supporting diversity and inclusion and explaining to folks why that's not just a marginalized student thing, but how that enhances the experiences of all students in our community as a whole. So, my identity does inform the work that I do in that regard.

When asked how much importance she places on her identity as a Black woman, Faith answered:

On a daily basis. It's probably, especially on a White on campus, at a PWI, I would probably 99.9%. Everything I do, I don't do it for myself, but I do it so that underrepresented students can see that this is possible. Anything's possible, writing is possible. That when they open up their textbooks and they see my name on there, they realize that it can happen. I don't do any work for myself anymore. I used to when I first started off, I wanted to be Dr. Faith. Today I just want to make certain that I'm leaving a legacy.

The phrase, "I don't do any work for myself anymore. Today, I just want to make certain that I am leaving a legacy" speaks to Faith's commitment to cultural advancement. The notion of cultural advancement is inherently embedded throughout the administrators' practices, and a distinct element of racial uplift is present when describing relationships with their students.

Melanie expresses she does the work to impact the Black community. Through this conversation, I interpreted Melanie's actions as being more than just for her personal gain, but impacting the Black community and helping students reach obtainable goals. In this instance, she does not relate it to any particular understanding, except that it is her life, ministry, and passion.

And this is, for me, about enhancing and educating the Black community. And I'm never going to touch the entire Black community, but I know that I'm planting seeds with folks who are planting their own seeds, who will plant their own seeds. I just have to have trust and faith that that is going to benefit us as a community. And when we win as a community, it is a benefit for the entire world. When the students are coming in and they can go back to their space, college becomes possible for someone else in their family. It becomes possible for someone on their street, for someone in their high school in a way that it wasn't before because now it's tangible and it's real. In the same way that a student who might have never believed that they could run a company or be a vice president will see me and say, 'Oh, I can do that too.'

As participants acknowledged their identity as an understanding that contributes to their motivation, it was evident that who these women are within the context of their identities was salient to my understanding of the influence of race, class, and gender on their academic roles. Participants placed a vast amount of importance on their identity as a Black woman. This importance placed on their racial and gender identity shaped how they approached their work. Participants make use of their own personal stories when working with RMS for several reasons: (a) to relate to students, (b) they feel as if their own personal stories humanize them and their experiences, and (c) to show RMS that anything is possible despite their circumstances, marginalized identities, or stories.

Researchers have documented there is added value in the stories and narrative accounts educational leaders of color, women in particular, share about the ways in which they lead, which are qualitatively different from historically mainstream leadership practices (Ah Nee-Benham & Cooper, 1998; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Jean-Marie, 2010; Santamaría & Santamaría, 2012). Additionally, participants expressed it is the cultural capital and commonality they share with students to be able to engage in their leadership practices effectively. The Applied Critical Leadership framework was used to operationalize leadership in a way that challenged the status quo. Few scholars have researched what it means to conceptualize leadership from a framework that addresses an individual's multiple intersecting identities and characteristics. The main justification for using the Applied Critical Leadership model throughout the study was to position the critical leaders at the forefront to confront and transform spaces that have a history of marginalization and oppression.

IMPLICATIONS

This work has provided additional insights into the leadership practices of Black Women VPSAs at PWIs. Black Women in senior-level administrative positions play a vital role in not only the growth of diversity and inclusion,

but also enhancing the experiences of RMS at predominantly White institutions. Many of the participants mentioned their experiences with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) on a variety of levels. Some participants attended an HBCU, while others either worked at these institutions or sent their children to them. Nonetheless, participants spoke highly of their experiences and attributed a lot of their success, motivation, and/or leadership practices to the HBCU model. For these reasons, I suggest further research should examine the preparedness of senior-level administrators who attended an HBCU and how those experiences matriculate into their work at PWIs. Furthermore, this research may speak to the scholarship in various ways; in particular, this research may help alleviate and dismantle stereotypes associated with HBCUs. In addition, this research could speak to the importance of continuing to fund HBUCs as an alternative to closing these prestigious institutions. HBCUs, which were originally created for Black youths who were excluded from other institutions due to racial discrimination, are an integral part of higher education. The culture of HBCUs can best be characterized as a place of refuge—one of caring, one that builds confidence, and one that equips students with the required understanding and skills needed to make an immediate contribution to the global environment. I argue that future research should pay closer attention to how HBCUs prepare their students to lead in confidence and make meaningful contributions to the lives of others.

Through analyzed themes, participants were able to answer in what ways their identity enhanced their ability to see alternate perspectives and practice effective leadership, a key question within the Applied Critical Leadership framework. Given the findings in the study, implications for practice should be considered. First, to implement institutional change across higher education, it is vital that everyone affiliated with the institution is committed to the change. It is more than just the responsibility of senior-level administrators. To continue to move higher education forward to adapt to the changing demographics of students, faculty, and staff organizations must take steps toward activist leadership. Activist leadership moves beyond simply stating that there is a commitment to equity, educational access, racial/ethnic diversity, and gender participation. It is a form of leadership that demonstrates through active engagement, within and outside the campus community, the importance and vital nature of building an inclusive community. To execute this form of activist leadership to affirm diversity, Zamani-Gallaher and colleagues propose 6 steps. (Zamani-Gallaher, O'Neil Green, Brown, & Stovall, 2009, p. 172).

The six steps include:
1. Take a clear diversity stance by integrating diversity throughout the organization. This goes beyond mission and vision statements to include organizational practices and policies.
2. Craft and articulate a clear message to campus constituents.
3. Educate the press/media about the institution's diversity stance, programming, and community-related events around diversity.
4. Encourage and participate in ongoing dialogues.
5. Use a leadership team approach.
6. Revise or correct failed practices.

Secondly, to respond to feelings of seclusion, academic isolation, and overall lack of satisfaction for racially minoritized students on predominantly White campuses, institutions must adopt culturally responsive practices to ensure the success of racially minoritized students. Given that culturally engaging campus environments are associated with higher levels of sense of belonging, and in turn, a greater likelihood of success in higher education (Museus, 2014), research has recommended that (a) enhancing faculty and staffs' cultural awareness and knowledge (Cartledge, Singh, & Gibson, 2008; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Singleton & Linton, 2006), (b) using culturally relevant language (Cartledge & Johnson, 2004; Monroe, 2009), and (c) increasing cultural competence of school leaders to support staff (Bustamente, Nelson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2009) are all important factors in creating a culturally engaging campus environment.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how Black women VPSAs understandings of their identity contributed to their motivation to create an inclusive environment for racially minoritized students. Drawing from the Applied Critical Leader-

ship framework, participants were positioned at the forefront to critically examine their understandings of their own identities in relation to the work they engage in. Santamaría & Santamaría (2012), referencing the framework, stated that educational leaders consider the social context of the communities they serve and empower them based on the educational leaders' identities as perceived through Critical Race Theory or another critical lens. Findings suggested that participants' internalization of culture, identity, and environment were influences for their methods of practice. Given the findings of the data, one could argue participants hold the knowledge and potentially the experiences, all while empathizing with racially minoritized students, given their intersecting identities and experiences on predominantly White campuses.

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ACTIVISM AS LEADERSHIP: SUPPORTING PROGRESSIVE ACTIVISTS WITHIN OUR WORK

S. Gavin Weiser, Illinois State University

This empirical work is driven by a study on the experiences and motivation of a group of college-aged student activists. Using a cohort of 14 millennial-aged activists who organized their work in response to a rise of right-wing authoritarianism in national and state politics, this paper presents recommendations for how student affairs professionals working in activities-oriented functional areas can leverage these experiences to build capacity around engagement, leadership development, sense of belonging, and work in partnership with these communities to challenge unjust practices within the academy. Further, I argue that in order to do our work of supporting students in their educational ventures, we can no longer claim notions of political neutrality.

On November 16th, 2015, I received word that many of the students I had worked with were planning a walkout. I had been organizing with some of these same students for an international game day as part of the kick-off for the institution-backed international education week, and we had been working together for months. When none of the students showed up to set up for the event, I was concerned and confused. Standing there in my confusion, I learned there was to be a walk-out, another episode in the campus-based activism that had been ignited across the country, starting at the University of Missouri where students and student-athletes staged a walk-out to protest the lack of action to challenge racism on campus (Frizell, 2015). I walked with my supervisor to watch the walk-out but we had been explicitly told to not walk with the students and to not engage with them, to not appear to be taking their side in the walk-out.

The group of students walked from an academic building where they had gathered, across our historic quad and directly onto the patio of the university's administration building. They read a letter addressed to the president and disseminated it among the students who joined them in the walkout (Randall, 2017). Following the address, they delivered a copy to the administration. The letter contained a list of demands, reflecting the needs of a variety of marginalized communities that were often overlooked by the administration. The list became known as the #2020Vision, calling for their demands to be met by 2020.

Less than a year later, after the election of the 45th president of the United States, another moment of activism would coalesce. Friday the 4th of November, a group of students gathered on our university quad; the students called it a *vigil*. They met and spread the word through social media to students, faculty, and staff who might feel scared, hurt, or fearful in the wake of the election and invited them to be in solidarity with one another. As my supervisor and I had done when we learned about the walkout, we walked over but had been told explicitly by an upper administrator that we were not to go, that doing so would "increase the size" of the "target on my back" as a "*troublemaker*" at the institution. I was not able to do my job, which was to support marginalized students, nor was I able to be publicly in solidarity with others, like me, who felt scared, hurt, and fearful.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Situating Activism in History

Activism has long been a part of the student experience on college campuses; it is as "American as apple pie" (Ellsworth & Burns, 1970, p. 5). This is true of all institutional types (Cohen & Snyder, 2013; Thelin, 2011). From

the Great Butter Rebellion of the 18th century to the rise of activism on college campuses in the 1960s, students have used their voices to advocate for their needs and beliefs. Perhaps most prominent within the mind of many people is the role of student activists in the civil rights movement of the 1960s, and with good reason, as many of the civil rights leaders during this era came out of the work of Black students, such as with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Freedom Rides, the Black Panther Party, and the Greensboro sit-ins (Astin et al., 1975; Carmichael & Thelwell, 2003; Carson, 1981; Seale, 1996; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2004).

After the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s – activism on campus was latent for many years (Rhoads, 2000). However, in the 1990s student were also quite engaged on college campuses once again. During the 1990s – reflective of many of the activisms on campus today, these movements were focused on issues of identity and became an outward rejection of the "force of conservatism" of the 1980s "that created an environment in which progressive-minded students saw little choice but to join arms to launch a countermovement" (Rhoads, 2000, p. 220). These movements during this era create a bridge to the activism that began in the new millennium through resonance.

Situating Activism Today

A resurgence of progressive student activism came about in the early part of the 2010s – on the tail end of high-profile international activist movements brought to the rest of the world through the use of social media such as Arab Spring (Gerbaudo, 2012; Idle & Nunns, 2011; Muñoz & Culton, 2016) and the Occupy movement. Millennial-aged activism was a bit different from those who came before them in the 90's (Rhoads, 2000) and those of the 1960s. The activism of millennials "synthesizes the identity politics of the New Left of the 1960s and the traditional critiques of class inequality and capitalism associated with the Old Left of the 1930s" (Milkman, 2017, p. 25).

Working through Grzanka, Blazer, and Adler's (2015) framework of *identity choreography,* Webb (2017) argued that three themes bound contemporary college-aged activists together: social networks, identities, and resistance. Using identity choreography—descriptions of various knowledges and experiences that are used to constitute identities and the identities of others (Grzanka et al., 2015)—Webb (2017) explored how contemporary student activists used social media as a place for meaning-making and coalition-building. Webb determined that social network space is important to activist identity and resistance, a finding that echoes the research of other scholars (Bailey, 2017; Cabrera et al., 2017; Carney, 2016; Gerbaudo, 2012). Webb asserted that through social networks and motivation from resistance, student activists were "able to fight against these systems of oppression, find community even in places where it feels like their community is trying to be erased, and generally improve the lives of not only themselves but others to come" (2017, p. 38).

Since the origination of this project, there has been an influx of new scholarship on activism within higher education. Notably, Linder et al. (2019) used narrative inquiry to highlight the experiences of 26 student activists engaged in identity-oriented activism. They also found that rather than university administration attempting to learn from and work aside these leaders, the administration often named these student leaders *troublemakers* rather than acknowledging their engagement with university life. Cabrera et al. (2017) critiques the overt reliance on social media, and Twitter in particular, among college-aged activists. In particular, Cabrera and his co-authors draw upon the work of Freire (2000) to highlight the importance of conscientização – or the interplay between critical self-reflection and the praxis of engaging in collective action for liberation. For them, they wondered if those engaging in slacktivism – defined as "political activities that have no impact on real-life political outcomes, but only serve to increase the feel-good factor of the participants" (Christensen, 2011, p. 1) can be activism. If those slacktivists cannot define activism, can they engage in conscientização? Something they believe, and I agree, is central to meaningful change. Ultimately they find, and I concur based on my work, that while digital engagement is important, "not all forms of online participation are equally effective at unlocking the potential of student activism" (Cabrera et al., 2017, p. 410). The artist-activists here were more able to build relationships with one another by coming together and finding connections with one another – often across activist commitments to engage in further activism. Particularly considering recent developments of the splintering of social media along ideological lines, organizing on social media may become even more fraught.

Other scholars before me had noted that administration can and should partner with student activists. Notably, Kezar (2010) used two previous studies (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005; Slocum & Rhoads, 2009) to ask new questions about how and why administration partners with activists, but also how activism is part of the developmental trajectory of students. They ultimately concluded that "common and everyday experiences" that students engage in that are perhaps the most impactful, both in their own development and in that they "provide ongoing opportunities to practice activism, and teach students the everyday skills of being a good citizen" (Kezar, 2010, p. 476). This impactful study laid the groundwork for many others to explore how administration can work with, rather than work against student activists.

METHODOLOGY

This project used arts-based educational research (ABER) to understand the reasons why individuals got engaged in activist movements and the impact of their involvement in such movements. By engaging in collaborative art creation, I aimed to uncover the hows and whys of activism among college students. Some (Gerber et al., 2012; Haywood Jr., 2013) claim that ABER is itself its own research paradigm – set aside from both qualitative and quantitative frames that it exists as a *groundless theory* (Neilsen, 2004) that moves action through its aesthetic quality as art and the act of art creation conveys meaning (Barone & Eisner, 2011). This aesthetic-oriented paradigm has a strong focus on reflexivity and empathy oriented through the creation and consumption of the art (Dunlop, 2001). As such, through this project, like other ABER-oriented projects (Burge et al., 2016; Burnard et al., 2017; Lynch & Glass, 2020) the act of creation and the created product itself served as data. At the outset, participants were invited to join a research project entitled the "arts of resistance research". I recruited those who would become the artists featured in this project by passing flyers on campus and attending RSO meetings after which I stayed around to answer any questions due to my insider (Villenas, 1996) orientation to campus, and to not perpetuate an extractive approach to research. Moreover, some of the students in these RSOs knew me through my work in the local community and campus.

Over 30 people expressed interest, but in the end, this project engaged 14 artist-activists. These 14 individuals were invited to a room in the student union based on their availability, and were given time and materials (paper, glue, glitter, stickers, tape, scissors, etc.) to create collage-based (Hopkins, 1997; Margolin, 2014; Scotti & Chilton, 2017) art that answered the question *how do emotions impact your engagement with activism?* Our second meeting met in an academic conference room in the WGS suite. An abbreviated listing of the 14 artists can be seen in Table 1 with self-articulated demographics in the order listed by the artist themselves.

These collaborative art-creation sessions were not focus groups - as the art, rather than dialogue, served to orient and build understandings. I used ABER to better comprehend and explore this subject in these politically contentious times. Because ABER "values nonhierarchical relationships" (Leavy, 2017, p. 10), it resonated with the collaborative commitments of this project as well as with my commitment to engaging in research informed by critical theory and feminism to "demand that research contribute[s] to the political struggles of oppressed groups" and as "democracy and the belief that those committed to that goal must exemplify their commitment to it in the practice of research" (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1993, p. 254).

Table 1. *Artist Listing*

Name	Demographics as Shared	Pronouns
Angel_Rainbow_Daisy	Latinx, Woman, Immigrant	she/her/hers
CatsAreBetterThanDogs420	Queer, Trans, White	he/him/his and they/them/theirs
Claire	Queer, Woman, Low Income	she/her/hers
D.Prince	African American Male Straight	he/him/his
Homogoblin	Lesbian White Woman	she/her/hers
Ladybug	White Male	he/him/his
Leia	White Woman	she/her/hers
Makeda	Queer African American Woman	she/her/hers
Mark	African American	he/him/his
Mothman	Queer, Genderqueer, Demigirl, White	they/them/theirs or she/her/hers
Radically Soft	Queer, Trans, Jewish, Nonbinary, Neurodivergent	they/them/theirs or ze/hir/hirs
Sky Blue Banana	African, Jewish	she/her/hers
Sparkle Enby	Queer, Trans, Disabled, White	they/them/theirs
Tēgan	Woman, White	she/her/hers

This art served as both methodology and data. They operated as the crux from which to build community and relationships and served as data to analyze the experiences of activism in which these artists engaged. Arts-based research allows us to not "draw near certain conclusions about states of affairs that generalize, but rather to secure technologies of mind that will enable us to peer more deeply into situations that might not be the same as the one that we study" (Eisner, 2007, p. 20). ABER can serve to deepen our knowledge and understanding of the world; it is messy, literally and figuratively (Eisner, 2007; Leavy, 2017).

Notions of rigor and trustworthiness are different from other methodologies. Eisner (2007) and Siegesmund & Cahnmann-Taylor (2007) evoke ideas around five tensions that guide ABER. This was later expanded upon by Cahnmann-Taylor (2017) to condense these tensions into four principles to guide ABER. These four principles are (a) Subjectivity and Public Good, (b) Attribution and Ethical Good, (c) Impact and Aesthetic Good, and (d) Translation to Scientific Good. By engaging with these four principles – I ensured that my research engaged ethically and transparently to craft a project that would benefit others.

RESULTS

As art represented both data and methodology, the results are both visual and also embodied and spoken through the dialogue present during the collaborative art-creation sessions. Here I present three primary findings, echoing earlier study (Webb, 2017) who framed their study's findings around notions of social networks, identities, and resistance. Here I think with these data about relationships, resistance, and identity betrayal.

Relationality: Between Artist and Scholartist

Strong relationships with one another occurred during this project. This was due in part to the medium and methodology – ABER. Art is hard, it is scary. We have been victimized by hegemony around many ideas, and art is no exception. As such, many artists expressed apprehension about their inability to produce art. One artist, Leia, mused about the "quiet shame" that permeated the room as the artists tried to translate what was in their heads into something tangible. Homogoblin expressed that attempting to create art is "really frustrating when [I] get [in my] head what I want it to look like, but I do not have the skills [to] translate it". This sentiment was shared by many of the artists. CatsAreBetterThanDogs420 threw his art away several times, restarting at least four times. At one point, he remarked that now "I'm just ruining this". Leia cried out in frustration that "this is incredibly difficult," while Claire expressed frustration with the limitations of her abilities. She stated that "they're supposed to, like, open—they're supposed to nest," speaking about her piece shown in Figure 1. Homogoblin was

likewise frustrated with her closet piece (Figure 2) because she could not decide where to put the speech bubble. Everywhere she tried to put it, she said, the bubble looked "like I'm farting the words." For some of the artists, there was frustration around the execution of art skills. Claire, trying to create something three-dimensional, expressed exasperation, stating that she "used to be so much better at spatial things; now I can't [do what I want to do]".

Figure 1. *Claire's Nesting Art.*

Figure 2. *Homogoblin's Closet.*

There were, and are, aesthetic struggles in all stages of this project. First, as illustrated above by the artists themselves, but even now as I attempt to re/present these artistic representations created by the artists. Both Figures 1 and 2 are marked by their interactivity and their three-dimensionality, things that cannot be adequately presented here. Most of the artists struggled to portray what they wanted through art in their work, except Sparkle Enby (Figure 4). Sparkle Enby described themselves as a "practitioner of high art" and they considered themself "meticulous to detriment." Even self-proclaimed artists struggled with the creation of art for this project.

Despite these aesthetic struggles, it was the awkward struggles here that helped to create community. Homogoblin, at one point, while working on her project, turned to me, and said that she "liked that you welcome all levels of artistic talent." The group, which had been in a quiet lull, erupted in laughter. She remarked, laughing, "we're not just identity inclusive; we're also terrible artist inclusive." This statement was important for two reasons. First, it spoke to the acceptance and affirmation of multiple identities in our space. Second, Homogoblin took ownership of the project & experience. When she used the words *we're not,* she signaled a transition from self to group, taking some ownership of the space with her remark about the inclusivity of multiple identities and degrees of artistic talent. This also reflected the non-hierarchal element of ABER as indicated previously (Leavy, 2017). This moment presented a turning point in the project where the artists began to take ownership and be invested in the project, which, I believe, crafted a bond within the community that allowed for future collaborative artistic endeavors on the topic of their activisms. This bond was central for moving forward with the project and has implications for our work within student affairs.

Student Leadership as Resistance

Resistance played a central role in the activism of these artists. This resistance centered on a rejection of discourses surrounding their identities. For some, their resistance existed beyond their own identity, with some of them, such as Leia and Makeda, calling for attention to intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991). Particularly, the

word *resist,* related often to a culture of resistance against the Trump presidency, was used in the visual poem by Mothman and Ladybug (Figure 3), the art by Sparkle Enby (Figure 4), and the work by Leia. These pieces outright speak to resistance against an oppressive governmental system and a *growing force of conservatism* which like the student activists of the 1990s felt as if they had little choice but to create community and launch a countermovement (Rhoads, 2000).

Figure 3. *Mothman & Ladybug's Visual Poem*
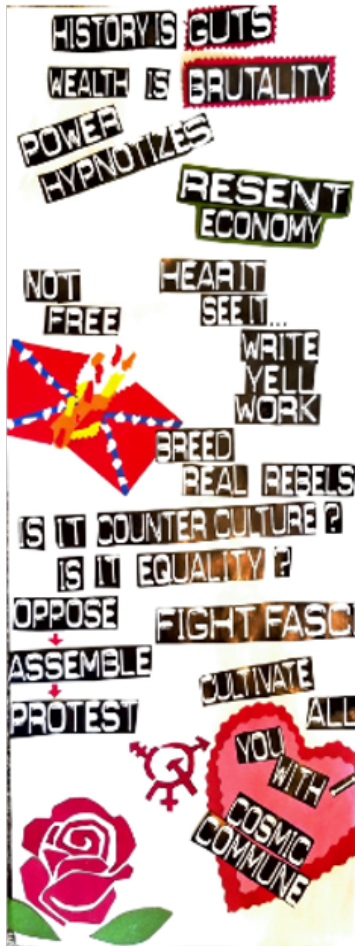
Figure 4. S*parkle Enby's Resist.*

Activist Killjoys

Many of these artists spoke about serving as activist killjoys, challenging bias incidents that occurred on campus by refusing to be silent or happy about the status quo (Ahmed, 2017). This rejection of the status quo in different forms was present in many of these works of art: transgressing a status quo through the art of Angel_Rainbow_Daisy (Figure 5); expressing frustration with the status quo, as illustrated by the art of CatsAreBetterThanDogs420; or subverting the status quo, as seen in the art by Ladybug and Mothman, Leia, and Claire. Many of these students also challenged the institution itself. Mothman and Ladybug wanted to encourage SCPWI to stop selling apparel in the campus bookstore that originated in sweatshops. Leia was involved in campus conversations regarding sexual assault through her involvement in the leadership of the feminist student organization. Angel_Rainbow_Daisy organized events on campus to raise visibility for Latinx students, as well as to highlight the experiences of DREAMers. Many of the artists engaged in this project held leadership positions in progressive student organizations at SCPWI. Angel_Rainbow_Daisy was the two-time president of the Latinx student organization; Leia was the vice president of a campus feminist organization. During this project, CatsAreBetterThanDogs420 became co-president of the campus feminist organization. Claire, during her first time at SCPWI, was the vice president of the gay-straight alliance; and Ladybug was the founder of the democratic socialist student organization, replaced by Mothman when his term ended. Thus, student leadership was a salient experience for many of these students.

Figure 5. *Angel_Rainbow_Daisy's Visual Poem.*   **Figure 6.** *Leia's Graduation Cap.*
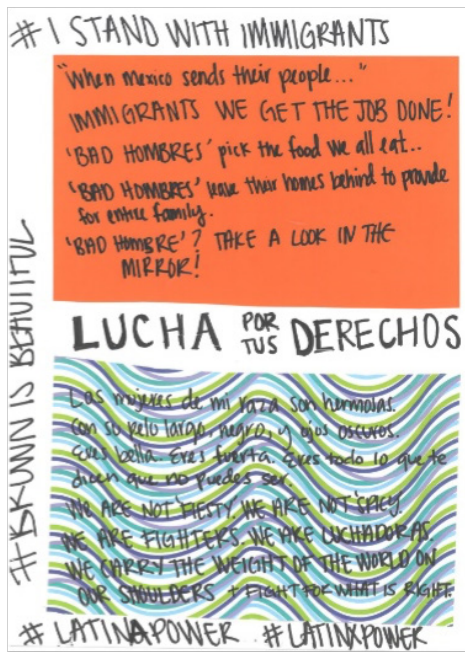
All these artists were students at the same institution of higher education. Most were undergraduate students, a few graduate students, and one was a recent graduate. As such, it was not a surprise that the institution itself became a site of conversation. One piece of art stood out as specifically directed at SCPWI. This piece, by Leia (Figure 6), is an image of a black graduation cap on a red field. The words on the cap seem as if they are swirling down, and they read as follows:

> Welcome to the University! Please enjoy your stay. Use your time here and engage with your peers in a meaningful way. Get involved, but only in the activities that maintain our current idea of a proper STATE values. Do get involved but don't speak out. Do speak up, but don't challenge oppressive behavior in professors and curriculum. Do involve in SA (sexual assault) awareness, but don't make people uncomfortable. Do enough to put on a resume, but never so much you disrupt the power structure.

Leia provided a critique of the way that SCPWI engaged with the neoliberal rhetoric of inclusion with her art. Starting with the phrase *Welcome to the University!*, Ahmed (2012) argued that those who need welcoming to a space, are not those who truly belong in that space, nor does that space belong to them. Further, the notion of *enjoy*[ing] *your stay,* supports lack of belonging, as it sounds as if one is *staying* at a hotel, therefore, the stay is temporary, whereas the institution, and perceivably its values will remain long after the person who is being welcomed has left. Leia wrote out *don't make people uncomfortable,* something she argued is central to activist work. This is important, as it shows that she did not feel welcomed into this space due, in part, to her activism. This is further supported by the *do enough to put on a resume, but never so much you disrupt power structure*. Thusly, Leia echoes the statement by Linder et al. that "rather than considering it a form of activism, involvement, engagement, or leadership" administrators "often resist minoritized students' efforts to interrupt and address hostile climates and do not consider them the right kind of activists" (2019, p. 529). This sentiment by Leia both acknowledged the structures of power but understands that the institution did not want students upsetting the status quo.

Student Identity Betrayal

Mothman also had some deep critiques of SCPWI's history related to issues of inclusion. According to Mothman, incoming students created a GroupMe chat for the incoming class of 2020, and despite not being part of that class, Mothman was put in the group chat, because their friend knew that Mothman would want to challenge the racial slurs used in the group. Mothman was astonished that there were a lot of people sharing racist memes and using slurs. Mothman was so bothered by this that they reported the incident to the chief diversity officer at SCPWI. The

incident happened in the summer of 2016 when I worked on campus in the multicultural center, and I distinctly remember it despite there being no coverage of this event, a common occurrence for many events that occurred on campus. We would hear from students, but it was never addressed nor covered in the paper.

Makeda, who had transferred to SCPWI after this incident, was upset to hear that this had happened, but not surprised. The incident had been Mothman's first experience with SCPWI, and at that time they had no desire or plans to come to school here. When Mothman eventually ended up at SCPWI, they felt anxious about coming to campus already having a reputation because of this incident. The emotions of anxiety and fear seemed to drive Mothman to find community once they arrived on campus. They hoped to find others who were willing to share emotions and who had similar commitments with whom they could work and find community (Goodwin et al., 2001).

Mothman expressed that they didn't know how this incident was handled after they reported it, but that they "think those people still go to [SCPWI]." After Mothman disclosed this incident to the group, there was a back-and-forth conversation regarding frustrations with SCPWI's handling of racist events on campus over the past few years.

> Makeda: Nothing ever really happens.
> Mothman :   That's the scary part, I think.
> Makeda: Like … when that stuff [racist incidents on campus] happens.
> Mothman: It's kind of, like, swept under the rug. It's all about image control. That's really scary to me because people are having their lives threatened a lot.
> Ladybug: It really just feels like we're, in my mind, like a political moment when people are kind of deciding … their priorities. Like, we have these milquetoast liberals—like, in 2018 you really gotta make the decision. What are you more concerned with? Like, the appearance of SCPWI as an image, or [*trails off*].
> Mothman: People's lives.
> Ladybug: Yeah, people's lives [*hesitates*] and justice. And it feels more—I don't know, like, if not more dramatic than ever, we like reaching for the [*trails off*]
> Leia: Like, performative?
> Ladybug: Yeah. Because it is like things are getting worse. We've got more Nazis out in the streets than in recent years, and it's going to keep getting worse.

I don't know what happened as a result of the GroupMe chat, but I know that when students at SCPWI expressed racist, nativist, or otherwise oppressive sentiments, rarely did they ever have to deal with any consequences. In the summer of 2016, an incoming student yelled "Build the wall" at a woman on campus in hijab. This incoming student was part of a small group in an extended orientation program, and thus easily identifiable, but no action was taken. Often, when something of this nature would happen, students of color would rise to the defense of the target of the oppressive act, and then the administration would reach out to the perpetrator to ensure he or she was safe from the students of color.

The oppressive statements did not always come from students. During data collection, a class was talking about public assistance, and the professor erroneously stated that the majority of individuals on public assistance are people of color (Jan, 2017). When a Black woman's cell phone rang, the professor reportedly said, "That may be the welfare office calling you now" (Dear, 2018, p. n.p.; Gaither, 2018). The president of SCPWI and the university's official Twitter account reached out to the student quickly, however, this professor has a history of racist and sexist incidents on campus according to Leia. This episode served, in part, to generate the art of Leia (Figure 6). She recounted that this art reflected "thinking about graduation and thinking about everything that's happening with Professor [Smith] and [his] department, who I hate." Leia has taken courses by him because she has a double major, one of which is in his home department, and two of his courses are required. According to her, "he's made incredibly inappropriate comments and said, like, very very not OK things in classes and said very horrifying things, and no one would listen to me when I told them". When Leia told the department chair or other faculty in his department about him saying horrid things, they would often respond by saying, "'It's just the way it is, and he's just very conservative and has those views.' And I was like, 'You can't say those things.'" Despite Professor Smith being contingent faculty, he was continually asked back to teach in the department, despite this high-profile case of racist language deployed in a class setting.

The experiences shared by these artists are examples of some of the narratives I have heard from students over my time working at SCPWI. I had heard a recording of a senior administrator calling an undergraduate student activist "uppity" on a voicemail after they believed that they had hung up the phone. Despite this, some students did still trust and believe in some of the work that student affairs educators, and in particular those in activities spaces, were doing for the benefit of underserved student populations, despite the institutional betrayal (Linder, Quaye, Lange, et al., 2019) that continued to happen before, during, and after this project.

MEANING OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Solidary is…

Like the opening vignette of my experiences working in a multicultural center focused particularly on using activities as a teaching tool for equity and justice education, many of us who work with disenfranchised student populations have experienced our own experiences of marginalization and push-back on our acts of support for these/our communities (Weiser, 2019). The nature of educational administration proposes a set of guidelines in which political neutrality is expected. However, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu famously stated "if you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse, and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality." There is no such thing as neutrality, there is only active anti-oppression or oppression. How do educators ally themselves with the students whom they purport to support without losing employment? Despite the risks, there is a moral obligation, particularly for those of us who hold privileged status(s) to leverage those to challenge unjust actions within the academy.

… Not a Four-Letter Word

Many of the artists were rightfully suspicious of any office on campus that was related to equity or diversity issues. Mothman stated that this was due to the way that the institution had historically handled these issues, that they were guided by notions of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997). Mothman stated that the "Board of Trustees try to frame it [discussions about oppression] in a way that will help them, and that's where I think it gets insidious." Mothman went on to state that the "grand culture at [SCPWI] is something that's kind of insidious" and that it was the "exact same culture of my high school. High school was a really scary experience for me and was a place where I was bullied a lot, and, like, that's why I didn't want to go to [SCPWI] initially." Despite this, some administrators do work *with* student activists to attempt to change their institutions.

However, it is no secret that in the academy, openly ideological work is precarious work (Adsit et al., 2015). This is not just true for staff members. Steven Salaita was denied a faculty position due to posts on his personal Twitter account relating to the Israel-Palestine conflict (Lubet, 2017). How do student affairs professionals and other university administrators show support for students who engage in openly ideological political agendas that, if institutionally supported, may jeopardize university branding (Ahmed, 2012; Stripling, 2018) and/or state funding (Kimbler, 2018)? To accede to an apolitical stance in our work deferring "inquiry in favor of the prestige that attends responsible complaisance" (Salaita, 2014, p. 232) is to side with oppression rather than liberation.

An institution in the southeast, the University of Tennessee, lost state funding for its Office of Diversity and Inclusion, which in turn decimated funding for the LGBT Resource Center. After the institution secured private funding to help support the resource center, as well as several other progressive programs, such as a safe sex week, the university president was pushed out, a move many saw as a conservative backlash to her support of progressive ideals (Stripling, 2018). In this one case, we see several ways that institutions support conservative ideologies (Adsit et al., 2015; Kimbler, 2018; Lubet, 2017; Stripling, 2018). Further, the support given to George Mason University, by the Koch Foundation, illustrates how conservative politics influence academia (Larimer, 2018) and reifies an effect of no support for marginalized students and working for progressive issues. Money from the Koch Foundation helped George Mason University grow from a small commuter school to a major public university and a center of libertarian scholarship. Additionally, these monies were not just given to George Mason University; they created faculty positions for which the Koch brothers sat on the selection committees (Green & Saul, 2018).

State institutions, while not existing in a vacuum, must not accede too quickly to conservative political pressures. Instead, we need to ensure that progressive initiatives have alternative sources of funding so that when a threat comes, there are ways of maintaining services for marginalized groups. Further, in cases like that of George Mason University, we need to not only ensure that monies given to institutions of higher education are transparent, but also encourage progressive donors to give to higher education. These are battles in an ongoing culture war, using economic support as a weapon being waged on college campuses by the political right. And they must be responded to. Community spaces for higher education professionals who work for the inclusion of marginalized students need support. Like the artists illustrated in this project, these educators need a community to engage in fellowship with to form alliances and build a network for activism to respond to hostile acts from the political right.

In Action

Crafting recommendations based on a study such as this is tenuous work, as ABER does not attempt to draw conclusions that generalize, but to peer deeply into situations to deepen our knowledge of the world (Eisner, 2007). Despite this caution, based on my understanding of the world based on these data and my experiences in working with student leader activists I propose three ideas for institutions and educational leaders to support students. First, we must consider how we can partner and engage with student activists and support their work. Second, we should be aware of the issues that students face. Finally, we should acknowledge the importance of activism as an important part of student leadership experiences within higher education.

Partnering

In all acts, there is always the possibility of harm. As one artist, Radically Soft, illustrated in their art piece (Figure 7), "Know better. Do Better." The full quote from Maya Angelou reads in its entirety, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." As university leaders, too often we are complicit in a system that was built through chattel slavery and still profits from this history (Wilder, 2014). Like Homogoblin, who in her statement shifted ownership of this project from *a you* to *an us*, we can and should work collaboratively with student activists to challenge oppressive histories and presents within higher education. Many leaders, me included, have been complicit in the shutting down and silencing of activisms. When our employment hinges on the precarity between ideology and obedience, we may accede to the latter. This is perhaps truer for younger professionals, who may not have the cushion of tenure or senior status that could allow them to challenge the hegemonic systems that maintain contemporary higher education.

As such, we should consider ways to enact ways that we can protect administrators who engage in partnership with activists. It is fraught to receive conflicting messaging about our role as educators – the how, if, and to what extent we should be supporting student activists (Linder, Quaye, Lange, et al., 2019). However, faculty have been benefiting from and engaging in activist-oriented scholarship. Student affairs educators would do well to also partner with these faculty who can provide cover and assistance from universities that might be less inclined to support staff members in more precarious employment situations. Not only is it more effective to work *with* activists rather than against (Kezar, 2010), it is in the benefit of student affairs broadly. ACPA in 2016 brought together a group of people to discuss the future of the association, and broadly the field of student affairs, out of this conversation they developed a document that serves as a starting point to challenge and change our field (Quaye et al., 2019). This document provides guideposts to consider what racial justice and decolonization can mean for student affairs educators. This document asks us the question of what "possibilities lie ahead if we know each other as humans? What future can we imagine together? How much more do we all gain by engaging our interconnected pursuit of racial justice and decolonization?" (Quaye et al., 2019, p. 20). These questions should guide our partnerships with student activists specifically, but students and one another more broadly.

Figure 7. *Radically Soft's Art.*

Relationships

Cabrera et al (2017) noted that self-reflection is a central part of engaging in activism, for Quaye et al (2019) self-reflection and awareness mean that we as educators recognize that we are the *leaders we've been waiting for* and to be able and willing to dismantle the resistance within ourselves to authentic engagement with collaborative engagement with others, including our students. We have come to believe that we are alone and thus often do not engage in collaborative work, that we need to reify power through our relationships with others, including our students. Status quo approaches to hierarchal relationships reify power and ought to be questioned.

Just as relationships were centrally important to the activist work that these artists engaged in, educators can use Wilson's (2008) idea of relationality to consider how we can be accountable to and with the students with whom we work. We must recognize the interconnectivity of people and their environment. Any time spent getting to know students is time well-spent (Noddings, 2012). Knowing the experiences of students means listening without having to ask – watching and not making students do the laborious act of teaching. They are here to learn, not teach.

Just as these artists acknowledged the relationships they built with one another, they also acknowledged when they felt as if they were betrayed by their institution and its agents. Returning to Leia's graduation cap, we can think about how she signaled that the institution made her, and other activists feel as if they didn't belong, something that is indicative of the betrayal many of these students felt. This form of betrayal is rooted in the lack of acknowledgment of the humanity and experiences of the activists, but also a tension between student activism - with its aim to foster social change through pressure, and governance (Cabrera et al., 2017). Through authentic relationships, we can partner with student activists rather than being in opposition and foster a sense of belonging, which is linked to student success (Vaccaro & Newman, 2017). Student affairs educators are well positioned to provide logistical, historical, educational, and emotional help, we must only reorient ourselves to be able to provide these services at the intersection of leadership for political and social change. Listening to students is a radical act when they often feel ignored or betrayed.

Activism is Part of Leadership

Small acts of activism teach citizenship skills and are more likely to create the change that activists desire (Kezar, 2010). Activism was part of the leadership portfolio for many of these, and other students. Like the students highlighted by Linder et al (2019), often these students were not seen as leaders on their campus, but as demanding (Randall, 2017; WeTheProtesters, 2015) *troublemakers* who would never be satisfied. Moreover, recent

scholarship on student leadership (Guthrie et al., 2017; Osteen et al., 2016) centers engagement in the act of transgressing normative boundaries within leadership education to consider leadership as the practice of freedom and to challenge oppressive hegemonies. We should utilize the conceptual frames of the Culturally Relevant Leadership Learning Model (CRLL) to support student activists and acknowledge activism's role in dismantling the whiteness that is inherent in university leadership cultures. Even if, as Cabrera et al (2017) argue, few actually engage in activism. However, for those that do – the experience is centrally important to their collegiate experience. Activism has long been part of higher education (Ellsworth & Burns, 1970; Thelin, 2011; Wolf-Wendel et al., 2004) and many activists in the Civil Rights Era of the 1960s were students themselves (Astin et al., 1975; Carmichael & Thelwell, 2003; Carson, 1981; Seale, 1996). Therefore, to consider activism on campus as a fad is to disregard and disrespect the work of those who came before us.

Marching Forward

Commitment to activism is complicated. We are all complicit at particular times and in particular spaces. Activism is a risk for young adults, as it is for university administrators and faculty members. Being out as an activist is a choice and one that must be considered seriously. If allies are serious about standing in solidarity we must not shy away from marching in solidarity, even when the institution demands that we stand back. As Audre Lorde wrote, "When we speak, we are afraid our words will not be heard nor welcomed but when we are silent, we are still afraid. So, it is better to speak remembering we were never meant to survive" (Lorde, 1995).

I saw first-hand how SCPWI hampered the activism of students. The work of creating more inclusive spaces for marginalized groups is often on the backs of those very communities (Weiser, 2017). Moreover, some feel that they cannot share their emotions or plans with their mentors, and they instead sequester themselves in a "hell hole" (Randall, 2017). Some of these students are not comfortable being out or challenging White supremacist narratives, due largely to their experiences of being shut down, or of the institution coming to the defense of White supremacist narratives. As such, student affairs educators must bolster their commitment to supporting and working in solidarity with these student activists. With the continual ascendance of right-wing exclusionary rhetorics attacking education writ-large, why must we continue to adhere to a politics of neutrality? If by being neutral in situations of injustice we choose the side of the oppressor, why must education, which is inherently a political act (Apple, 2010; Bourdieu, 1999; Gramsci, 1971), align itself with "neutrality?" It is clear through the literature that the right has continually eroded acts of inclusion within education, and education itself over the last 40 years, beginning at least with the industry-led A Nation at Risk (Gardner, 1983), that claimed that the foundations of our society are being "eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people." This document began a time of industry intervention in the purpose of education as either a public good or a private commodity (Labaree, 1997).

If education is, as I argue, part of a democratic society, then education must be for the public good. Education for equity and diversity is essential to education across the continuum of levels. Solidarity is NOT a four-letter word, and educators must work in tandem with student activists to increase the capacity for inclusion and equity within college campuses. Student affairs educators in activities-oriented positions are well-positioned to design experiences to help foster critical thinking about student leadership and activism within a campus community.

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JCAPS

IMPACTS OF MICROAGGRESSIONS AND NEO-RACISM ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS' SENSE OF BELONGING

Allyson McVickar, University of Massachusetts Lowell

This study explored international student sense of belonging within three state universities in New England and found a concurrent theme of microaggressions and neo-racism on their campuses that has affected their sense of belonging. Despite trends in the international higher education literature that have historically investigated ways to improve the academic experiences and engagement of international students, the findings indicate less attention has been paid to the sense of belonging felt by these students, particularly how microaggressions and neo-racism affect their sense of belonging. Microaggressions, or subtle verbal or nonverbal insults directed towards people of color, often unconsciously (Solorzano et al., 2000), were a common experience of international student participants and frequently mentioned in communications with faculty, domestic students, and staff participants. Suggestions for best practices in fostering international student sense of belonging for higher education professionals and practitioners are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

International students were first documented in the U.S. in 1868 as refugee militants or skill builders in agriculture and infrastructure, mostly from Latin American and European countries. Historically, students have sought educational opportunities in countries other than their own with the intention of getting advanced education capable of making them exceptional among their peers (Akanwa, p. 273). Unfortunately, bias and microaggressions towards the international student population can be seen throughout this history. For example, after World War I, most Asian citizens hoping to study in the U.S. faced biased barriers, such as the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which excluded Chinese laborers from studying in the U.S. post-war (Wolgin, 2011). This act, amongst others, is a relevant example of challenges and biases international students face due to their racial or cultural identity. It is assumed that microaggressions occurred then and were not reported in fear of deportation, which is still a problem today (Lee, 2007).

Scholars define microaggressions as brief, everyday exchanges such as gestures, tones or looks that unconsciously insult people of color based on their racial minority group (Franklin, 2004; Sue, 2004; Sue et al., 2007). Yeo et al. (2019) found examples of microaggressions in their study of Asian international and American students consisting of exchanges where the perpetrator gave what they considered a compliment saying, "You speak English so well" and "You talk just like us" but these were hurtful to the victim, insulting their intelligence with the assumption that they lack English skills based on their ethnicity or class. Another more blunt and extreme example of racial microaggressions includes sayings such as "fresh off the boat" or "go back to your country" that negatively influenced the international student experience and increase cultural borders and segregation among students (Yeo et al., 2019; Yeo et al., 2018).

International students' experiences with microaggressions have increasingly been on the minds of international students during their U.S. college search as well as after their arrival to the U.S. (Chirikov & Soria, 2020). From the ever-changing immigration climate, the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, and the current pandemic that began outside of the U.S., international students have had a history of feeling unwelcomed against based on their origin, race or religion associated with these historical events (Glass & Westmont, 2013; Lee & Jenny, Rice, 2007)

and ever-evolving issues of racism in the U.S. over time.

Neo-racism, or a type of modern microaggression towards foreigners seen in policymaking, unfair treatment based on accent, and other biased actions by the majority (Lee, 2007), is a newer type of bias international students are experiencing in the United States. While international students are adjusting to a new culture, language, and academic expectations, these students may be experiencing racism (or neo-racism) for the first time, as these are systemic constructs that have long existed in the U.S. more so than in other countries. This under-researched topic has become more relevant in recent years as neo-racism has presented additional boundaries for these students (xenophobic immigration policies, lack of employment opportunities) and the impacts on their sense of belonging, which this study explores.

This study consisted of focus groups, interviews, and an online survey distributed to international students at three universities in New England. The purpose of this study was to understand international students' sense of belonging on their campus, particularly upon arrival and currently during a pandemic, to help improve and foster a more inclusive community for these students.

Review of Related Literature

A sense of belonging is defined as a "sense of personal involvement in a social system so that persons feel themselves to be an indispensable and integral part of the system" with an emphasis on recognition and acceptance of a member in school systems, social relationships, and mental health (Anant, p. 21). Baumeister and Leary (1995) found the importance of feeling a sense of belonging to overall well-being and social connectedness through ongoing social contact based on sentimental concern. Therefore, failure to form these relationships may result in feelings of loneliness and social isolation and, in this case, affect the international student experience.

Scholars have long written about the varying levels of microaggressions international students, or a student who has [legally] crossed a national or border for the purpose of education and are not enrolled outside their country of origin (UNESCO, 2021), have faced since the 1860s. The bodies of literature this has produced tend to fall into three main categories: cultural validation inside and outside the classroom, feeling valued by their university, and the effects of neo-racism (Kramer, 2009, Lee, 2007). This population consistently contributes diverse views inside and outside the classroom, economic growth, and increased globalization on campus (Hegarty, 2014, Ngyuen & Larson, 2017, McFaul, 2016, Lou, 2013, Lee & Rice, 2007, Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). While these contributions are noteworthy for their universities, the overall student experience may not be as obviously understood.

Microaggressions and Sense of Belonging

Research suggests that experiences of microaggressions have a negative effect on underrepresented students' sense of belonging, particularly Black and Latina/o students (Hurtado & Alvarado, 2015) and increasingly within Asian international students (Lee, 2007; Houshmand, Spanierman & Tafarodi, 2014). When using sense of belonging to measure integration into a college community, positive links have formed with validation and faculty support and can vary by race and ethnicity (Strayhorn, 20120; Ostrove & Long, 2007; Hoffman et al., 2002). The analysis of data that Hurtado, Alvarado, and Guillerimo-Wann (2015) collected at 34 universities over a two-year period found that when a student witnesses or is a victim to acts of microaggressions or bias, such as hearing negative remarks from faculty, staff, or fellow students, "the less validated they are likely to feel, and consequently, the lower their sense of belonging on campus" (p. 72).

Lee and Rice (2003) found traces of biased acts such as denial of funding or job opportunities during the application process, on-campus interactions with staff and administration, and confrontations during off-campus interactions such as trips to the grocery store. Constantine et al. (2005) found that the Kenyan, Nigerian, and Ghanaian international students in their study all experienced discriminatory treatment. While it is not possible to label such interactions as "microaggressions or exclusion based on foreign status, language, or race, and how much is misperception," the experiences of White international students and those of color are not the same (Lee & Rice, p. 393), especially as racism evolves.

Neo-racism and Sense of Belonging

Lee and Rice (2007) introduced the term "neo-racism" as discrimination based on cultural and national differences, finding varying experiences with biased treatment based on country of origin, particularly within international student populations. Balibar (2007) defined neo-racism as "racism without race" (p. 85), as this type of racism goes deeper than mistreatment based on skin color into more of a systemic barrier, such as targeted immigration policies. In their extensive study of 500 international students in the Southwest U.S., Lee and Rice (2007) found that students from Asia, India, Latin America, and the Middle East reported considerable microaggressions, while students from Europe, Canada, and New Zealand did not report any direct negative experiences related to their race or culture.

More recent studies found safety to be a top concern of international students (Suh, Flores & Wang, 2019; IIE, 2019; Redden, 2020), as well as for prospective students. According to the IIE annual 2019 Snapshot Survey (conducted by Sanger & Baer, 2019) of hundreds of prospective international students considering studying in the U.S., 64.8% did not feel welcome in the U.S. and cited the U.S. social and political climate as a potential deterrent.

At the time of this writing, the COVID-19 pandemic has further complicated the study of microaggressions faced by international students. Currently, research on this topic is sparse; however, some preliminary data collection has occurred. In July 2020, Chirikov and Soria (2020), members of the Student Experience Consortium, surveyed international students specifically and found staying healthy and maintaining status properly were the top two concerns, followed by being worried about instances of xenophobia, harassment, and microaggressions at both the graduate and undergraduate level. Additionally, 12% of international students reported personal experiences with hostile or offensive behavior based on their nation of origin, with the most common instances happening to students from Asia (i.e., China, South Korea, Japan, and Vietnam), noting it affected their mental health and has affected their interactions and friendships with their U.S. peers (Chirikov & Soria, 2020).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study uses the Symbolic Interactionist Theory (Blumer, 1969; Snow, 2001; Tran & Pham, 2016) to explore positive and negative perceptions regarding international students' sense of belonging. This theory consists of three assumptions: First, individuals act towards things and each other on the basis of meanings they attach to these things. This assumption can be related to international students and their experiences with microaggressions as they first arrive on campus; their first conversations and initial experiences, whether positive or negative, may influence how they feel about that certain experience or person. Second, these meanings are derived from social interactions with others, formed in and through activities as people interact, and derived by the individual from that interaction. Social interactions that international students experience may influence their sense of belonging as they search for social support systems in the U.S. Third, these meanings are managed and transformed through an interpretive process that people use to make sense of and mediate the things that they encounter (Tran & Pham, 2016; Carter & Fuller, 2015). I will be drawing from all three of these assumptions as they all play an important role in the sense of belonging among international students and the role microaggressions and neo-racism can play in the interactions they have experienced.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Data, Instruments, and Sample

This study is an exploratory mixed-methods study from the perspective of international students, domestic students, faculty, and staff at four research universities in New England. These four universities were chosen because of their diverse number of international students, various types of campus locations (suburban vs. city), all are state universities, and their differing departmental structures in place to support international students. The study was submitted for IRB approval and was deemed not to be human subjects research. Therefore, IRB approval was not needed.

The quantitative data was collected through an online survey via Qualtrics administered to international students (n=370) attending three research universities in New England. The online survey was sent to a total of 3,900 international students. Three of the four staff members interviewed assisted in sending out this survey to their list of all international students (undergraduates, graduates, and scholars, regardless of visa category). One university's staff member was unable to send the survey to their international students so as not to overwhelm their inboxes during a busy period. International student participants were emailed the purpose of this study along with a definition of sense of belonging. This survey consisted of 23 questions, including multiple-choice questions, open-ended response questions, and subjective continuum scales. The survey took approximately 8 minutes to complete and consisted of 16 quantitative questions and seven qualitative questions. Questions explored international student sense of belonging upon arrival vs. current, relationships with domestic peers, and challenges experienced. This study did not specifically set out to find instances of microaggressions, but it was a common theme mentioned often by these students in the open-ended questions regarding challenges experienced.

The qualitative data methods consisted of semi-structured interviews and focus groups of faculty (n=3), staff (n=4), domestic students (n=3), and international students (n=14), all conducted via Zoom due to the current COVID-19 pandemic and video/audio recorded using Zoom's audio transcription feature and lasted no longer than 60 minutes each with 9-10 questions. The summary of the demographics of the focus group and interview participants is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: *Demographics of Focus Group and Interview participants*

Type of Participant	# of Focus Groups	# of 1–1 Interviews	# of Participants
Domestic Students	1	–	3 (all female)
Faculty	1	–	3 (2 females, 1 male)
International Students	4	–	14 (10 females, 4 males)
Staff	–	4	4 (all female)

The domestic student focus group consisted of three domestic students from the same university obtaining degrees in finance and accounting, education, philosophy, and French. These participants were all female, all students of color, and all had participated in a buddy program where they were paired with international students to build multicultural friendships. Some interview questions for this focus group included "How was your experience on your campus with international students prior to the COVID-19 pandemic", How many international student friends do you have, and how often do you see them?", and "What challenges or successes have you seen within these students outside the classroom?" Domestic student participants were obtained through a mentorship program conducted on their campus.

The faculty focus group consisted of three faculty members from the same university within the departments of engineering, public health, and education. The faculty participants consisted of two females and one male, who had been teaching at their university for at least five years and teach an average of ten or more international students per semester. Some interview questions for faculty included "What challenges have you witnessed international students experience," "How have you contributed to international student sense of belonging, if at all?" and "What is your greatest area of need when teaching international students?" Faculty participants were obtained through contact with academic deans at the selected university, who agreed to send out a recruitment email asking faculty to participate in this study.

The international student focus groups consisted of 14 students from three different campuses in New England. Of these students, ten identified as female, and four identified as male. Some of the questions asked in these focus groups included "How does your university make you feel that you belong?", "Tell me about a time you felt like you belonged with (1) faculty, (2) domestic students, and (3) other international students?" and "What do you recommend the university do to better support you and increase your sense of belonging on campus?"

Lastly, the individual interview participants consisted of staff members that worked closely with international

students within their university for at least five years. Some interview questions for this focus group included "How long have you worked with international students?", "What is your understanding if their sense of belonging on your campus?" and "How do you think your office contributes to their sense of belonging?" Staff participants were identified through an organization that brought together state college and university staff who worked with international students.

Table 2 below provides a summary of the demographics of all the study participants, indicating gender identity, degree level (enrolled or teaching), and continent of origin. As seen below, there were 312 international student survey participants, of which 172 participants were female, 135 were male, one was transgender, one was non-binary, and three preferred not to say. The majority of these survey participants were graduate students (66%, or 209), while 33% (n=104) participants were undergraduate students. Again, this study was not specifically designed to understand their experiences with microaggressions, but it became a common theme mentioned by students.

Table 2: *Demographics of study participants (international & domestic students, faculty, staff)*

Participant Type	Gender Identity	Continent of Origin	Degree Level
Survey respondents	Female (172)	Africa (25)	Undergraduate (104)
(International Students)	Male (136)	Asia (241)	Graduate (209)
	Non–binary (1)	Europe (20)	
		North America (9)	
		South America (21)	
Focus group participants	Female (3)	North America (3)	Undergraduate (2)
(Domestic students)			Graduate (1)
Focus group participants	Female (2)	North America (3)	Undergraduate (2)
(Faculty members)	Male (1)		Graduate (1)
Interview participants	Female (4)	North America (4)	
(ISSO Staff members)			

Overall, the international student survey respondents represented 63 countries and five continents, the majority from Asia followed by Africa, Europe, South America, and North America.

Analytical Procedures

In analyzing the data, I used descriptive statistics, noting the frequency of responses to the survey questions around international students' sense of belonging using Qualtrics analysis tools for helpful visuals such as bar graphs and pie charts. I also analyzed the data using SPSS and constructed graphs and figures. For some quantitative items, I provided bar graphs through Microsoft Word, as seen below. For the open-ended questions, I used NVivo to code themes such as relationships with faculty, relationships with domestic students, and other factors that may have contributed to their sense of belonging and the role of microaggressions within the qualitative items and data. I imported the answers from the qualitative questions into NVivo and identified themes as "relationships with faculty," "domestic student relationships," and "other" for other influences that contributed to the respondent's sense of belonging on campus.

The qualitative data was analyzed in NVivo. All eleven focus groups and interviews were imported from my Zoom account (where the recordings were stored) into NVivo. I then created codes based on the participant list and noted major findings by theme or category as a memo. For the open-ended survey questions, I used NVivo to code themes (first by major finding, then a second, more in-depth analysis) such as relationships with faculty, relationships with domestic students, and other factors that may have contributed to their experiences with microaggressions and its effects on their sense of belonging.

Sense of Belonging Increased Overall Since Arrival

In analyzing the data, descriptive statistics were examined in terms of international student sense of belonging. Table 3 shows the participants' sense of belonging during their first semester at their university overall. Survey responses indicated they felt "Somewhat" of a sense of belonging (45%), followed by "Very Much" (27%), then "Not Much" (21%) and, "Not at all" (5%). Students reported key offices as contributors to their sense of belonging upon arrival, such as their International Students and Scholars Office, Career Services, Admissions, and academic departmental staff. Another contributor to their sense of belonging during their first semester was other I belonged when I got information from my own community such as student leaders in the Chinese Students and Scholars Association." As literature suggests (Tran & Pham, 2016; Carter & Fuller, 2015; Lee & Rice, 2007), international students tend to feel most comfortable and in community with those students from their home culture, or other international students who have experienced the transition to U.S. culture.

Table 3: *Sense of belonging during their first semester*

Sense of Belonging During First Semester	# of Survey Respondents
Very much	102
Somewhat	168
Not Much	80
Not at all	18

In terms of communicating with others on campus after arrival, particularly faculty members, the majority of international students spoke with them weekly (43%). The topic of most conversations was classwork (54%), followed by career or professional development (27%). Only 8% of international students talked about outside interests such as families or hobbies with their professors.

Over time, study participants reported contributing factors to their sense of belonging as positive interactions with students, faculty, and staff, getting more involved on campus through obtaining a campus job or joining a club or event such as a buddy or mentorship program to meet other students, developing relationships with roommates and lab mates, and even through conversations with unlikely community members. One undergraduate student from India, Tarrin, explained, "I really enjoyed little conversations with the university employees such as the janitors." Other students wrote about talking with dining hall workers and strangers they would meet in local restaurants.

When asked how students would rate their sense of belonging currently, the majority (59%) of students feel an increased sense of belonging since they arrived to their campus. However, as seen in Table 4, some international students disagreed. Over 30% of students feel their sense of belonging hadn't changed, and more than 9% of students feel a decreased sense of belonging at their university since they arrived. Claudia, an undergraduate survey participant from Southeast Asia, wrote

> Even after being here for years, I've seen [American] people be more selective and do not accept international students into their groups due to high difference in lifestyles. This is why international students group up with other international students and try to separate from local people.

Claudia is describing negative interactions she has had with American people in feeling like the "other" when trying to make friends with natives. As international students are excluded from the host culture, they turn to each other for support, community, and a sense of belonging, yielding more positive interactions and comfortable relationships.

Table 4: *Sense of belonging currently since arriving to their campus*

Sense of belonging Since Arriving on Campus	# of Survey Respondents
I feel an increased sense of belonging since I arrived	191
I feel my sense of belonging hasn't changed	98
I feel a decreased sense of belonging since I arrived	31

Biases experienced based on country of origin

In the open-ended questions and focus group data, a common theme mentioned by international students was their experiences with microaggressions and neo-racism and its effects on their sense of belonging. When asked about challenges they faced on campus that influenced their sense of belonging, 32 survey respondents mentioned some form of microaggressions or bias they had experienced. A graduate student from India, Shaima wrote,

> It's always a challenge when people find out you're an international student. They said things like 'you don't look like you grew up in a third world country, you must be from the elite class so you made it out'. These notions of what an international student should be like or what backgrounds they are from has definitely made it hard for me to be myself.

As seen in this quote, the bias that all international students are either from third-world countries or from rich families can result in negative interactions with their domestic peers. This assumption can be hurtful to students such as Shaima as it implies that her admission to a U.S. university was due to family wealth or class instead of her hard work.

Another undergraduate student from India, Sahaj, shared the judgment they received for being Indian and, "being able to speak English fluently because most people think that in India, we are all uneducated and that people barely know English." Sahaj is another victim of microaggression because of the assumption being made by the perpetrator that he should not know English due to his cultural background, even though English is a primary language in India (Rukmini, 2019). Historically, assumptions have been made by members of that host culture that international students from certain countries are poor based on both class and race, stemming from the stereotype that only rich international students attend U.S. universities (Tran & Pham, 2016).

Race as a new construct

Racism, and now neo-racism, is an integral part of the U.S. and its institutions, such as higher education. International students are feeling this sense of being the "other" because of the culture the U.S. has built around racism structurally catering to the majority, a part of the racial formation process (Omi & Winant, 1986) that may not be as common in other countries. Hout, a Cambodian student, had trouble understanding structural racism and its effects since it was not common for them in their home country.

> It's been hard to understand some structural concerns such as racism. In my country, people aren't characterized by their "race." I had never been categorized in such a way before I came to the U.S. So, first, defining which race I belong to, and second, being empathetic with my colleagues' concerns has been puzzling.

Race and its complexities may be something many international students are unfamiliar with as this construct is not as common in their home countries, leaving them confused by the labels and biases they are experiencing, resulting in these microaggressions. For example, in Cambodia, inequalities are not based on race but by ethnic tribes and ethnicity (Kiernan, 1990). Just as the caste system determines treatment and opportunity in India, race is the determinant in the U.S. Opposition exists in other cultures, it is just experienced in other ways.

Neo-racist immigration policies influencing microaggressions

One student mentioned religion saying, "I think most students don't know a lot about Muslims so they are just afraid to make contact with me." Recently, under the Trump administration, statements were made, and laws were enacted that did not allow international students from certain countries into the U.S. For example, the Muslim ban occurred when Trump was quoted as saying, "what we need is a travel ban from certain dangerous countries," which were Muslim-majority countries such as Iraq, Syria, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen

(Arafa, 2018). Others cite the Trump administration, particularly a Latin American student, noting, "I always felt like I've been seen as someone different, especially now with the new president [Trump] who is enhancing racism towards Latin American people." When the Trump administration posed all Mexicans as, "drug dealers, criminals, rapists" (Mark, 2018), it negatively affected international students' sense of belonging, and heightened their sense of fear. This rhetoric and neo-racist treatment, or modernized unfairness in policy and decision-making based on cultural background, of minorities by the Trump administration trickled down to U.S. citizens influencing exclusive behavior and negatively affecting the sense of belonging among all foreign students.

Non-verbal microaggressions between cultural affinity groups

Additionally, unexpected mistreatment was mentioned between international students and domestic students from similar cultural backgrounds. For example, one Asian student participant wrote, "Being an Asian student, I didn't necessarily feel always connected to Asian American students but rather with my group of international friends." An African student mentioned, "I was always left out when forming a group. I believe there was one time where an African American friend formed a group without me." This data point shows the impacts of neo-racism and its tendency to pit communities against each other. There is an assumption that affinity groups would form together, but that is not the case. Again, various levels of class, religion, family makeup, and understanding of race can cause disconnection and hesitation to interact as their beliefs do not coincide.

During the focus group discussions, microaggressions were mentioned indirectly and less frequently than in the survey responses. Karen, an undergraduate Middle Eastern student, noted their perceived disregard when in a class with majority domestic students. "As an international student, I come from a completely different background, and I may have different opinions sometimes. Sometimes I feel like my opinion isn't as discussed or as heard by more domestic students, especially if it's a majority domestic class." This unequal treatment silences international students, contributing to thinking that their opinions do not matter and, therefore, should not be heard. This will negatively affect their willingness to participate in future discussions or interactions in the future. These observations of non-verbal microaggressions, whether minor or major, can have effects on international student sense of belonging.

DISCUSSION

International students' sense of belonging is imperative to a positive educational experience. The interactions these students encounter with the host culture influence their ability to feel accepted and a valued part of their U.S. campus community. The intersections of microaggressions and neo-racism and international students and scholars' sense of belonging has been an under-researched area, particularly in the 21st century. In addition to challenges around language and cultural adaptation, this study has shown the lesser-known but equally impactful issues of microaggressions that this population faces. However, 72% of respondents reported high rates of sense of belonging, suggesting that overall experiences are positive. These experiences could include positive interactions with natives, other international students, and university programs. In addition to these overall experiences, evidence suggests that international students experience microaggressions and neo-racism, which have the potential to negatively affect their sense of belonging. This study examines those microaggressions and neo-racism most likely to detract from students' sense of belonging.

The construct of neo-racism is rampant in the U.S., and international students, as shown in this study, are not exempt just because they are students. Neo-racism has impacted international students from certain countries (Muslim-majority most recently) from the onset of their application process. Through rigorous visa interviews, increased likelihood of being detained at airports upon arrival and mistreatment based on their accent or lifestyle choices (Lee, 2020). And again, most international students are experiencing this type of racism for the first time because they may be coming from countries where discrimination is based on ethnicity, class, or color lines, so bias occurs on multiple levels. Racism in the U.S. is a social construct around xenotype categories, and in India, for example, oppression exists from the caste system through a color-based societal structure (i.e., lighter vs. darker skin colors along the same color line).

Whether it be inside or outside the classroom, the interactions these students experience (particularly during their first semester) can make or break their attitudes toward their host university and its community. These host institutions should take responsibility for this by ensuring inclusion and implementing programs to connect domestic and international students through. Few studies consider how institutions and individuals may purposefully or inadvertently marginalize international students (Beoku-Betts, 2004; Lee, 2005). As seen in this study, this marginalization is felt by the international student community within their interactions.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The unforeseen pandemic posed some challenges during data collection. The apparent campuses shut down due to Covid may have affected response rates to both the surveys and interview requests. Four universities were asked to send out this survey, and three agreed. Additionally, a substantial limitation is the lack of survey questions addressing microaggressions directly. The questions asked about international students' sense of belonging overall in terms of interactions, connections to their community, and challenges they face, not about experiences with microaggressions specifically; this is a potential area for further research.

There was possible sampling bias of the international students and university faculty due to access and proximity. For example, all the domestic student focus group members were all female, and all students of color, and the findings cannot be generalized to the larger international student population. Similarly, the three faculty members came from one institution, and their responses are not generalizable to all four university campuses.

Lastly, and most interestingly, the data from the international student focus groups tended to focus more on the positives of their experiences. The focus group participants may not feel comfortable talking honestly about all aspects of their experience at their university, perhaps in fear of repercussions or punishment since the conversation was recorded. Further research could suggest a more complex analysis that includes specifics regarding race and class while in their home countries compared to experiences based on those constructs while in the U.S.

SUGGESTIONS FOR BEST PRACTICES

While universities are working to improve the student experience, a specialized focus should examine international students' sense of belonging and the impacts of microaggressions and neo-racism they are experiencing. Glass, Wongtrirat, and Buus (2015) explain the importance of education acting as an equalizer in the U.S. between insiders and outsiders, yet a lack of a deeper knowledge of the outsider student's experience will only further contribute to these inequalities and continue the reality that the international student experience is not equal. The findings in this study informed some best practices for higher education professionals and practitioners who interact with international students.

Inside the classroom: Spend time building trust and safety

As Consoli et al. (2022) wrote, "a reoccurring recommendation to faculty interested in international mentoring was that they acquire a basic knowledge of the international mentees' home countries and cultural backgrounds" to deepen understanding and consideration of their students (p. 890). Simple notions from faculty, such as learning a few welcoming words in their language, or displaying their country's flag, could also strengthen a trusting relationship and improve the students' sense of belonging. If their home city information is available, find where in their country their home city is located and research some historical facts about their city and country that could build familiarity and understanding between practitioner and student.

Inside the classroom: Internationalize course learning outcomes

Students feel a sense of belonging when they see themselves reflected in the readings, projects, or other work they are conducting throughout their program. Faculty working or teaching alongside international students should include articles in their course curriculum that are focused on issues outside the U.S. or are written by international authors. For example, if a professor is lecturing about the effects of COVID-19 on student mental health, they

should reference statistics that include students worldwide or cite a study conducted by an international scholar.

Outside the classroom: Understand the lived experience of international students

Design and implement a comprehensive survey or individual interviews (or both) to identify improvements and successes of the international student experience on your campus. Constructed by university staff or upper administration who work closely with international students, and repeated annually, ask which resources and procedures that are in place are most or least welcoming, or which are the most and the least used, and why. Collecting data will not only help the students feel heard but will provide higher education professionals and practitioners the feedback they need to advocate for and enact change.

Outside the classroom: Host programs that merge domestic and international students

While group projects in the classroom require a working relationship between international and domestic students, this study found that the majority of communications between these students end after the project is completed resulting in no lasting friendships or connections outside the classroom. Programs such as a buddy or matching program between domestic and international students encourage students to get to know each other on a more personal level outside of their studies. These informal volunteer programs are a low-cost way to begin to bridge the cultural gaps between these two groups, educate various groups about various cultures, ideally decrease occurrences of bias and microaggressions, and help build community. These types of programs can be implemented by Student Affairs staff in collaboration with other internationally focused departments on campus.

CONCLUSION & POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

This study explored international students' sense of belonging and the impact of microaggressions at three research universities in New England. Sense of belonging is important for all college students but in particular for international students as they navigate cultural, procedural, and academic differences in addition to finding community and acceptance for the next two to four or more years. During the 2019-2020 academic year, the international student population declined by 1.8% (IIE, 2020). However, the full effects of the pandemic on enrollment and belonging are not yet entirely understood. Overall, international students are experiencing microaggressions at an alarming rate from community members, and action and advocacy is required to battle this decline.

Having worked with international students for almost a decade, I can say that the effects of the pandemic have had an immeasurable impact on international student mental health. The stressors of worrying about their families from a distance, not being able to travel home for emergencies, dealing with neo-racism, all while maintaining a full course load, have had negative effects on their well-being overall. Despite the pandemic, institutions are still bringing international students to their campuses. All faculty, staff, and fellow students need to be prepared to help support them with intentional resources and support both mentally and physically for their incoming and current international students. U.S. universities need to look past the numbers and refocus on the international student experience in order to increase their sense of belonging.

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WHITE CAMPUS ACTIVITIES PROFESSIONALS NAVIGATING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION EFFORTS: A CRITICAL WHITENESS PERSPECTIVE

Dustin Evatt, Western Carolina University

Guided by critical perspectives on race and whiteness, this qualitative study explores how White campus activities professionals navigate diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in relation to their privileged racial identity. Using a phenomenological approach, the findings reveal a common thread of white comfort and solidarity within campus activities at both the individual and institutional levels. Furthermore, this study offers recommendations for how White professionals can move beyond white comfort by integrating theories and perspectives of critical whiteness into their daily practice in campus activities. In doing so, White professionals can begin to disrupt normative actions, behaviors, and attitudes of whiteness within themselves, their teams, and institutions.

INTRODUCTION

In her seminal book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*, Beverly Tatum (1997) states that whiteness, or the assumed superiority of White people, is reaffirmed through cultural images and messages and is like smog in the air. At times, "the smog is so thick it is visible, other times it is less apparent, but always, day in and day out, we are breathing it in. None of us would introduce ourselves as 'smog-breathers,' but if we live in a smoggy place, how can we avoid breathing the air?" (p. 6). Indeed, there is no way to avoid breathing in the smog. We all live, work, and operate in a society that is structured by whiteness, and higher education, like most U.S. institutions, was founded upon white ideologies and prospers by reinforcing these white cultural norms (Patton, 2016). Marilyn Frye (1983) describes these white cultural norms as a deeply ingrained way of being in the world. Whiteness shapes actions, social practices, and dispositions and thus constitutes a part of the "know-how" or practical knowledge of navigating daily life. Leonardo (2004) supports this claim by sharing that although whiteness was created centuries ago, White people recreate it on a daily basis at both the individual and institutional levels.

In order to shed light on these racial inequities, the field of campus activities should be attentive to the underlying systems and structures of dominance and power relations that manifest in our daily actions and behaviors. In fact, as part of NACA's updated research agenda, scholars have articulated the need to rigorously examine historical and traditional campus programs using a lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion. If not critically examined, campus activities professionals "may unintentionally sustain a continued marginalization of minoritized students and the inequitable power structures that create such marginalization – along with an environment of white and male supremacy that underlies both" (Rosch et al., 2021, p. 59). From how we[1] advise our student programming boards, to developing workshops and programs, to leading teams and departments, campus activities professionals, in particular White people, should actively work to push the boundaries of our understanding of whiteness and the racial smog that permeates the fabric of higher education and student affairs.

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[1] I use the words "our" and "we" to indicate that I am also part of the white racial majority, thus positioning myself directly in this work. In doing so, my intention is not to exclude but rather to put the focus on White professionals who should be doing the heavy lifting in the pursuit of racial equity in higher education.

I argue that now, more than ever, the field of campus activities needs bold, courageous, and critically conscious White leaders who are willing to fully engage in racial equity and inclusion efforts to transform their institutions. We need campus activities professionals who are ready to get their hands dirty to address rooted issues of oppression and injustice within higher education and student affairs. This begins with critical reflection and analysis and moves from understanding to action (Shields, 2010). The purpose of this critical qualitative study was to explore how White campus activities professionals navigate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts at their institutions in relation to their privileged racial identity. Using a Critical Whiteness Studies framework, this study reveals how these individuals navigate, challenge, and/or reinforce whiteness in campus activities and offers insight and recommendations for how White campus activities professionals can begin thinking about their work differently in relation to their whiteness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In their article on student belonging, Peck et al. (2022) make a case that "infusing" diversity, equity, and inclusion into our work is not enough; "it must become our work" (p. 5). Indeed, campus activities professionals must be critically conscious of our racial identity and have a vision and commitment to infusing DEI efforts into all aspects of our work, including programming, policy development, advising, and supervision. The core of diversity and equity work is inclusion. Campus activities professionals should strive to create an environment where "all students, regardless of background and individual attributes, feel valued by their respective institutions and effectively connected to and within them" (Peck et al., 2022, p. 8). Historically, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have shouldered the responsibility for transforming institutions to be more inclusive. Under their leadership, significant progress has been made to advance issues of racial equity and inclusion in higher education, particularly at predominantly white institutions (Valverde, 2003). On the contrary, White professionals have the choice to engage or disengage in DEI issues due to the safety and comfort of being White, thus reinforcing our privileged position. An aspect of whiteness that plagues higher education today is white solidarity – the unspoken agreement among White people to protect white advantage and dominance (DiAngelo, 2011).

The goal of white solidarity is "to ensure that other White people do not feel targeted or any type of racial discomfort. White solidarity is maintained by remaining silent about anything that exposes the advantage of whiteness and tacit agreement to remain racially united in the protection of White supremacy. To break white solidarity is to break rank" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 58). In light of this, whiteness is maintained through the lack of engagement and critical consciousness of White people. Critical consciousness involves critical reflection and action on the part of the individual (Freire, 1970). Critically conscious leaders are "committed to lifelong learning and growth, to recognizing and eliminating prejudice and oppression, to increasing awareness, to facilitating change, and to building inclusive communities" (Brown, 2004, p. 92). If White campus activities professionals are to foster inclusive excellence throughout their institutions, they should concern themselves with racial equity, critical consciousness, and social change (Adams & Bell, 2016). This journey begins with deeply understanding one's own racial privileges and biases and how our positionality influences and shapes our work in campus activities.

Whiteness in Campus Life

The acculturation into whiteness is evident on college campuses today through the use of symbols, rituals, and activities. As Tichavakunda (2021) states, "It would come as little surprise to anyone studying higher education that race matters for the college experience. Campus life – joy through recreation, celebration, and leisure, in this case – is racialized" (p. 313). This is most evident at U.S. institutions, particularly those located in Southern states that have historical statues and buildings named after people (almost always White men) who were proponents of racial discrimination and slavery. Furthermore, disputes about racist university mascots continue to take place. These disputes often involve BIPOC members who find these mascots to be racist and stereotypical, whereas White alumni and students express that the mascots are deeply tied to their identity and the identity of the institution. These cultural symbols function as physical manifestations of the institution's values, which directly affect the campus climate (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). Similarly, Tichavakunda's (2021) research on Black joy describes how Black students experience campus activities, in particular homecoming festivities, in relation to their

White peers. He suggests that "such findings demonstrate that what are implicitly understood as 'traditional' or 'mainstream' facets of campus life are veiled terms for White campus life" (p. 314). These "mainstream" programs and activities structure the campus culture and activities, thus reinforcing whiteness in higher education.

Over the years, there have been many initiatives attempting to address racism on college campuses. Unfortunately, many of these interventions have limitations in improving cross-racial group dynamics in higher education. The success of the programs is defined by educating people about diversity, and this is subtly, but importantly, different from understanding and addressing the roots of racism. For example, there are several initiatives within campus activities aimed at increasing awareness of racial differences, such as diversity celebrations and cultural heritage programming. While these initiatives help create space to enter the conversation on racial differences, they do not always address systems or structures. Awareness does not imply a critical analysis of racial oppression. This is a key difference between diversity programming and the anti-racism movement. Many institutions find pride in promoting these diversity efforts; however, this misconception fails to address the core of racism - the system of white supremacy. As Peck et al. (2022) remind us, "As campus activities professionals continue to engage in the anti-racism movement, they need to examine how they are changing their organizational structures [e.g., budgets, policies, marketing strategies] and staff behaviors [e.g., mentoring, advising, leadership training approaches] to improve access to educational opportunities" (p. 9). To move beyond awareness, it is necessary to understand racism as systemic and make the invisible visible by highlighting the ways in which our institutions structure and recreate the unmeritocratic privileges White people enjoy (Evatt-Young & Bryson, 2021; Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000; Tichavakunda, 2021). As White campus activities professionals work to challenge and disrupt these white norms, we must remember that our whiteness is deeply embedded into our daily interactions and decision-making in campus activities. The degree to which racialized experiences are transparent to White people is vital in understanding the nuances of how race and privilege play out in our work (Bonilla-Silva, 2001).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS) guided this research. CWS reveals the normalized social structures and systems that continually recreate white supremacy and privilege. Importantly, CWS is an epistemological and methodological lens derived from Critical Race Theory (CRT). According to Solórzano and Yosso (2002), CRT "foregrounds race and racism in all aspects of the research" (p. 24). Furthermore, CRT is a tool to expose inequities that exist within social structures that might otherwise be rendered invisible. Once exposed, "campus activities professionals can alleviate them by working to create anti-racist environments" (Peck et al., 2022, p. 9). Building on CRT perspectives, Critical Whiteness Studies scholars view whiteness as a system existing within a social, political, historical, and economic context. Doane and Bonilla-Silva (2003) share that CWS "reverses the traditional focus of research on race relations by concentrating the attention upon the socially constructed nature of white identity and the impact of whiteness upon intergroup relations" (p. 3). CWS challenges dominant ideology and critically examines how the unmeritocratic and unwarranted privileges of whiteness are enacted, normalized, and maintained within society and institutions.

Towards a Critical Whiteness Perspective

Although many higher education scholars and practitioners use the language of "white privilege" and "whiteness" interchangeably, I intentionally use the term "critical whiteness" to undergird the systemic and structural nature of white supremacy in higher education. Cabrera (2017) coined the term "white immunity" as a way to highlight the limitations and pitfalls of traditional notions of white privilege. White privilege is most often described as an invisible knapsack of unearned advantages that White people are unaware of (McIntosh, 1989). This definition of white privilege presents an entry point for White people to examine and reflect on our own racial identity and positionality. Too often, however, the discourse of white privilege stops there.

White privilege remains focused solely on White individuals and their identities rather than undertaking a critical examination of systems and structures of white supremacy. This approach individualizes racism instead of conceptualizing it as a systemic reality (Leonardo, 2004). Cabrera (2017) refers to this as white privilege pedago-

gy and argues that it can lead to a distraction from racial justice. When White people are asked to reflect on their racial identity, the focus devolves into the good White/ bad White binary, which "often leads to very superficial and simplistic analysis of privilege" (Applebaum, 2010, p. 29). Focusing solely on white privilege provides a narrow approach because it examines the "who" of whiteness and not the "how" of whiteness (Levine-Rasky, 2000). Taking a critical whiteness approach means examining and dismantling the structural and systemic components that sustain whiteness as the dominant ideology.

METHODOLOGY

This critical qualitative study employed a phenomenological approach to illuminate the frequently invisible phenomenon of whiteness that continually recreates white supremacy and privilege in higher education. Critical qualitative inquiry is ultimately about recognizing power dynamics in order to shed light on the taken-for-granted perspectives that perpetuate unjust and oppressive social conditions (Cannella & Lincoln, 2012). At the heart of this work, the phenomenon that needed to be brought to consciousness and transformed was whiteness. Therefore, I combined a phenomenological approach with critical qualitative inquiry to guide this study and explore the phenomenon of whiteness in campus activities.

Researcher Positionality

The goal of a qualitative researcher in representing others' perspectives is to do so authentically with results that stay true to the participants' views (Glesne, 2011). While the intent of my research was to disrupt and decenter whiteness as the norm, I, as a White researcher, had to actually center my own whiteness in order to move beyond the boundaries and constraints of racial social constructs. Therefore, the process of self-reflexivity became crucial throughout the entire research process. As a White, gay, cis-gender man, I am positioned within society and higher education to reap the benefits of my privilege. Before transitioning to a faculty role, I worked in student affairs for over twelve years, primarily in the areas of campus activities and leadership development. Growing up in a small, conservative town in the South, I always desired to be perceived as a "good White person," and I never considered myself to be racist or part of the "problem." I most certainly fit the mold of a white progressive, a term that DiAngelo (2018) describes as any White person who thinks they are not racist, or is less racist… or already "gets it." Through much reading, dialogue, and deep reflection, I developed a much more robust and complex understanding of my whiteness. The dichotomy of good versus bad began to shatter once I started to own my whiteness and shift my perspectives of what it means to engage in diversity, equity, and inclusion work as a White person. In relation to this study, I used self-reflection tools, such as memo writing, to ask myself similar questions that I asked the participants. For example, I thought deeply about how I feel about being white and how those feelings influence my behaviors and actions as a campus activities professional. I also reflected on the times that my whiteness has benefited me and how I have perpetuated systems of whiteness in my work and personal life. It was important for me to grapple with these questions, and more, throughout the research process to remain reflexive and grounded in my own experiences while (un)learning and engaging with the participants.

Participant Recruitment and Selection

This study involved ten participants representing a wide range of institutional types and geographic regions across the United States. Participants were recruited using social media, in particular, two Facebook groups: 1) Higher Education Professionals, and 2) Student Affairs Professionals Dismantling White Privilege. Participants were selected using criterion sampling in order to identify a small, specific group to interview based on a set criterion (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015). In order to participate, individuals must have self-identified as White and served in an administrative role at their institution. Additionally, participants must have been engaged in some form of equity work at their institution. I felt this was an important criterion for the study because it provided a backdrop to engage participants throughout the interview process because they were able to provide examples of how they put this work into action. Although the participants' racial identities were the same, the group represented a diverse range of other social identities, including gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and religion/spirituality. Furthermore, the participants' institutional demographics represented a variety of institutional types ranging from large, public research institutions to small liberal arts institutions to private

Ivy Leagues to community colleges. Participants were geographically located in regions throughout the United States from the Deep South to New England to the Midwest and to the Pacific Northwest.

Data Collection and Analysis

Guided by a phenomenological approach (Vagle, 2016; van Manen, 2001), I conducted three rounds of individual in-depth interviews with the ten participants (30 interviews total). These private interviews took place via Zoom, a remote video conferencing service, and were audio recorded for transcription. I used a semi-structured interview protocol with the purpose of capturing participants' descriptions and stories in order to interpret the meaning of the phenomenon under study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). Questions were framed in the context of motives, values, concerns, perceptions, and needs in relation to the participants' whiteness (Glesne, 2011), and I remained focused on listening to the participants' experiences to lead me through the interview. At the conclusion of each interview round, I sent the audio recordings to a professional online transcription service within 48 hours of the interview. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to ensure confidentiality throughout the process. After the interviews were transcribed, I read each transcription in detail concurrently with interview notes, checking for errors and developing preliminary analyses of the data.

In staying true to the phenomenological analysis process, I used Yin's (2016) data analysis framework to guide me through the data and interpretation process. The phases included: (1) Compiling, (2) Dissembling, (3) Reassembling, (4) Interpreting, and (5) Concluding. This approach was both comprehensive and useful to aid in the analysis and to apply Vagle's (2016) whole-parts-whole process as a lens to highlight the focal meanings embedded within the data.

FINDINGS

The purpose of this critical qualitative study was to explore how White campus activities professionals navigate DEI efforts at their institutions using critical whiteness perspectives. Consequently, the common thread that emerged from the data analysis process was white comfort. White comfort occurs when it is easier for White people to discuss racial topics that are not in close proximity to them, both emotionally and physically. As a result, White people choose to bask in the glory of our complacency rather than challenging our preconceived ideas of race. The findings of this study reveal that white comfort occurs at both the individual and institutional levels. In this section, I highlight the four themes that emerged from this study and interweave points of analysis using critical whiteness perspectives to illuminate the complexities of whiteness in campus activities.

"Too Close to Talk About"

The participants discuss barriers that exist while engaging in DEI work. In particular, Sue, a White woman working at a public research institution in the Southeast, states that proximity can be a barrier at her institution. Sue highlights white comfort at the institutional level when she says, "From a campus perspective, the institution does better when we participate in dialogues around national events, particularly when those national events aren't occurring on our campus. We can talk about race as long as it doesn't involve any of us." When institutions choose not to engage in racial topics that are happening at the local level, it feeds into white comfort because it allows race to remain an abstract, objective idea that White people do not see themselves embedded within. Dan, a White man working at a mid-sized public research institution in the Mid-West, recalls his experience with race discussions on his campus:

> From a bigger perspective, I think White people acknowledge that racism exists, but their definition of racism is based on White folks in costumes carrying pitchforks and torches. They see the extreme view, like perhaps a lynching, as the only definition of racism. There's not a willingness or acceptance to recognize that there are smaller and cumulative things that are compounding the same series of situations. The same daily actions or behaviors over time can be just as impactful and negative as something much more extreme. When racism happens right here on campus, it becomes too close to talk about. If we're going to question things, it's going to require a whole lot of work. Perhaps the idea is that we're not ready to do the work, or maybe we're not motivated to do the work.

Dan's story of racism becoming "too close to talk about" supports DiAngelo's (2011) notion of white fragility. That is, when topics of race or racism become too personal, White people shut down or disengage. It is easier to pretend that nothing is wrong rather than leaning into discomfort and addressing racism head-on, thus basking in white comfort.

"One of Us"

From a different perspective, participants were asked to reflect on when it was safest to talk about race on their campuses. The participants' responses illustrate a range of reactions - complacency, hesitation, and frustration. John, a White man working at a public research institution in New England, shared that it is easier for him to talk about race when he is in mostly white settings. He shares that, "It is easier not to confront something or push the topic of race when I'm surrounded by other White people because we have a common experience. We share a similar entry point into the conversation." John's unwillingness to discuss or confront topics of race in mostly white spaces allows him to maintain his white comfort and solidarity with other White people. Audrey, a White woman working at a community college in the South, exhibited hesitation because she struggles with talking to other White people about race, but she is trying to get better… "The people who really need to know about racism are people who look like me and you. I struggle with that still. I make mistakes all the time, and I have to ask myself… next time, what can I do better next time?"

In yet a different approach, Amy, a White woman at a private liberal arts college in the Pacific Northwest, challenges white comfort. She shares the following:

> There's a really vivid memory in my mind of when I went to a faculty member's office to have a specific conversation, and he started unloading his emotions on me. I thought to myself, what are you doing right now? What is this? Who do you think I am for you in this space? What signals am I giving to this person where they can't cry in public places, but they automatically feel they can confide in me? I think they made a lot of assumptions about me because I'm white… They're like, "Oh, my walls can come down a little bit because you're one of us." I certainly walked away from that conversation with more questions than answers.

In her story of meeting with a White faculty member, Amy seems frustrated that a White colleague would immediately assume that she is on their side simply because they are both white. This story represents white solidarity in that White people assume that they are all on the same "team" and can let their guard down, as if creating a deeper level of trust among White people. Although the participants approach discussions of race in various ways, they are all positioned in the same way – you are "one of us."

"Giving Something Up"

Perhaps the most pervasive act of white comfort in higher education is inaction. Several of the participants discussed their experience with whiteness within the context of committee work. Liz, a White woman at a private Ivy League school in New England, describes her experience serving on a campus-wide diversity and inclusion committee:

> We got together and talked about how things were an issue but never tied down any concrete things that we would do. That was very frustrating for me; we just talked ourselves in circles. It was one of those committees where there weren't clear expectations about what the committee was supposed to be doing and what we had the power to do. We would meet faithfully, you know, a bunch of well-meaning White folks, but nothing ever came of it. None of us had to give anything up to change things… We could talk our well-meaning White people talk as much as we wanted and say, "Oh, isn't it a tragedy?" and then go to lunch and go back to the world as it was.

Liz's experience serving on this committee is yet another example of white comfort. The committee met on a regular basis but never "had to give anything up to change things." Ironically, the inaction from the committee members led to the reinforcement of whiteness at their institution, the very thing they were trying to work against.

What's in it for me?

In the fight for racial equity and inclusion, White people have to be willing to give up our power and control. However, the majority of White professionals are fearful of "giving something up," as highlighted in Liz's previous story about committee membership. As another participant acknowledged, "There have been times when I've seen White colleagues benefit from their whiteness under the guise of student advocacy. For example, they offer to help BIPOC students because they want the students to become reliant on them." White people's desire for BIPOC individuals to have to rely on them manifests in very real ways. White professionals may carry with them an internal mindset of, "what's in it for me?" while trying to be the best White person they can be. This phenomenon was best illustrated in Rebecca's story of asking a Colleague of Color to join her in a meeting to have a difficult conversation with a Student of Color. Rebecca, a White woman working at a private liberal arts school in the Mid-Atlantic, shared the following:

> I feel motivated to do the [DEI] work, but there are times I've felt uncomfortable in making decisions, especially when having a difficult conversation with a Student of Color. I felt like I was going to be perceived as, "Oh, they're making this decision because she's White, and I'm not." So, I've had those moments where I've thought maybe if I bring a Person of Color alongside me in this conversation, it'll go better. Or sometimes saying, "Hey, would you [a Colleague of Color] be willing to have this conversation with the student because thus far my interactions have not been positive, and I want this to end well for the student."

Although well-intentioned, Rebecca's decision to ask a Colleague of Color to join her in the meeting or to ask her colleague to have the difficult conversation instead of her is an example of white comfort. Rebecca rationalizes her decision by stating she "wants it to end well for the student," yet in doing so, she actually places the burden back on her Colleague of Color. Instead of centering the Student and Colleague of Color in this situation, Rebecca does not want to feel any type of racial discomfort and prioritizes her own emotional well-being. Furthermore, Rebecca's desire to be perceived as a "safe" White person with whom BIPOC students can confide is actually grounded in her own desire to maintain power (i.e., status and reputation) at her institution. Although subtle, whiteness manifests in daily interactions with students and colleagues in the ways White people advise, supervise, and lead committees and teams (Evatt-Young & Bryson, 2021).

DISCUSSION

The participants in this study shared their struggles and successes with navigating DEI efforts at their institutions. The findings underscore the importance for White campus activities professionals to not only recognize their whiteness, but to constantly develop and practice critical consciousness. That is, White professionals should possess the humility, vulnerability, and courage to center themselves as racial subjects of critique. Assuming that one has "arrived" at some mystical destination of racial equity is the first sign that the individual has not developed critical consciousness (Freire, 1970), and serves to reify whiteness. As Hayes and Juárez (2009) remind us, "when you show your whiteness, you are not entitled to a good White person medal" (p. 740). As the findings indicate, when White professionals have a "what's in it for me?" mentality, they center their own whiteness and seek to maintain power and control. Bell (1980) conceptualizes this as interest convergence theory meaning that racial equity for BIPOC communities will be pursued and advanced when they converge with the interests, needs, expectations, and ideologies of White people. Part of developing critical consciousness involves examining our biases and motives for engaging in racial equity work. The participants highlighted the power dynamics at play within higher education, and many, not all, recognized the first step in disrupting whiteness is talking about race. In doing so, White professionals will have to unlearn the white norms and customs that we are all so socialized into. Using Tatum's (1997) language, White campus activities professionals must acknowledge the racial smog around us – see it, name it, and work courageously with BIPOC communities and White peers to clear the smog. As such, it would serve White professionals well to utilize Critical Whiteness Studies as a lens through which to approach their work in campus activities.

From an institutional perspective, White campus activities professionals must aim to disrupt white solidarity that exists within higher education. As DiAngelo (2011) suggests, breaking rank implies going against power

dynamics and challenging structures. To go against these structures is to potentially jeopardize your career and personal and institutional reputation. This perceived jeopardy or peril seemingly makes it too risky for White professionals to break the white solidarity that unconsciously exists at their institutions. Herein lies the perpetuation of white comfort in campus activities. As several participants indicated, they are afraid to lose credibility and are worried that their reputation will be tarnished if they challenge white norms. Consequently, they fail to realize that they are actually centering whiteness with these inactions. To overcome white comfort, White professionals should ask themselves when and how topics of race come up on their campuses. Who are the primary communicators and organizers of these racial issues? If White campus affiliates (i.e., students, administrators, faculty, and staff) are not somehow engaged in these efforts, then the institution is at risk of reifying whiteness by placing the burden back on BIPOC community members. Let me be clear, however, White people should not be the only ones leading the charge. Rather, we should be amplifying the voices of BIPOC communities and working alongside them to accomplish social change (Adams & Bell, 2016).

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Diversity, equity, and inclusion work is complex and messy. There is no "magic answer" to solving racism in higher education or society. White campus activities professionals must be cognizant not to overly simplify racial issues because it could further tokenize the voices of BIPOC individuals and remove our responsibility for both problems and solutions (Hytten & Warren, 2003). To follow, I offer recommendations for White campus activities professionals to begin thinking about their work differently in relation to their whiteness.

Personal Development

Personal development can come in many forms, such as reading, attending conferences or workshops, taking a class, listening to podcasts, and watching videos or documentaries. The critical piece is that personal development must be ongoing and consistent. As highlighted in the finding, "too close to talk about," White professionals have to be comfortable being uncomfortable. Rather than seeing race as a distant, objective construct, we have to be introspective and situate ourselves within the larger system and structures of whiteness. As we engage in the personal development process, we must be willing and open to examine and suspend the power dynamics that exist in higher education. White professionals must be vulnerable to learning from anyone at any level of the institution, regardless of title, tenure, or position. Using a critical whiteness lens, we must ask ourselves, "Who defines truth?" and "Where and whom does knowledge come from?" If we think that knowledge can only emanate from faculty members or someone in a position of power, we have embraced a white-dominant way of thinking. When we shift the paradigm and embrace that knowledge and truth can come from anyone and anywhere at our institution (including students!), we begin to deconstruct power dynamics and open ourselves to new ways of knowing and being in the world. This way of thinking will help White campus activities professionals expand their white racial frame (Feagin, 2013) and begin to shift from white comfort to critical whiteness.

Staff Development

Extending beyond personal development, White campus activities professionals should also consider how they are leading and serving others. Research shows that higher education leaders' workloads offer very little opportunity to reflect on their practice (Diaz, 2011). Consequently, leaders continue to operate in the same ways they always have. Critical reflection should occur periodically and be reinforced through institutionalized practices, especially in staff development. Using a critical whiteness approach, the goal of leaders and supervisors should be to empower staff members to engage in diversity, equity, and inclusion work on a daily or weekly basis. White campus activities professionals should aim to help their team members critically reflect on their experiences by speaking with them - not at them - and by asking open-ended questions to help them make deeper meaning of their experiences. One way White campus activities professionals can make race dynamics explicit is by integrating experiential learning activities focused on racial equity and inclusion into staff meetings. For example, consider inviting team members to compile a list of resources (articles, videos, books, podcasts, photos, etc.) centered on the topics of race, oppression, whiteness, and privilege. From there, integrate these resources and topics into staff meetings to prompt dialogue and reflection. While participating in these dialogues, reflect on

how your positionality, as both a White person and as a leader within the department, informs your interactions in the space. Take stock of how power dynamics are playing out and flowing amongst the team members and practice active listening. When you do speak, use "I" statements to take ownership of your words and actions and lean into racial discomfort. White leaders must understand that we have a choice about whether or not to engage in uncomfortable conversations about race; our BIPOC colleagues do not have this same privilege. Therefore, White campus activities professionals should role model racial humility and vulnerability in order to transform their teams and organizations.

Examining Power Dynamics

White campus activities professionals must be fully aware of the power we hold as both insiders and outsiders. This means challenging the system of whiteness while working within the system. In order to disrupt "business as usual," we must view power as part of a larger, interlocking system that we are all embedded within. This involves understanding how our racial ideologies – tacit and "common sense" beliefs – influence our work in campus activities. For example, color-blind ideology finds virtue in not "seeing" race, which removes meaning and value from one's lived experience (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). The goal is for White people to examine our racial ideologies and assumptions and begin to unlearn and reconstruct power dynamics that give agency to BIPOC individuals. In the context of campus activities, this means questioning our normal decision-making processes and operations. Whiteness cannot be undone over the matter of a workshop, course, or even a semester. Therefore, campus activities offices should re-frame programmatic efforts by eliminating the one-and-done approach to racial equity. Often, when campus activities offices use a one-and-done approach, whiteness prevails due to pushback from students, faculty, or staff. Comments such as, "Why is this a requirement?" "This isn't my job," or "I don't have time for this," run rampant through our teams and student organizations. When this tension arises, White campus activities professionals must not fall weak to criticism nor make half-hearted attempts to reconcile the issue. These are the moments when coalitions and infrastructure are critical to the success and sustainability of anti-racism work. To transform their institutions and organizations, White campus activities professionals should work alongside their BIPOC colleagues and other White leaders to build a culture that challenges "business as usual" and disrupts power dynamics.

Amplifying BIPOC Voices and Experiences

White campus activities professionals should be critically conscious of the racial differences that exist between BIPOC staff members and White staff members. There is no doubt that BIPOC staff experience work life very differently than their White peers, especially at predominantly white institutions (Gusa, 2010; Hurtado et al., 2012). Therefore, White leaders must be mindful not to take a cookie-cutter approach to racial equity work. In framing this approach, we have to give up the self-fulfilling prophecy that we must be perceived as a "good" White person. This does not mean holding any staff members less accountable than others, but rather, it involves taking an intersectional approach to leadership and modifying our approach with each team member to take into account their lived experiences and cultural differences. In fact, this intersectional approach to supervision and leadership increases motivation because people feel valued, seen, and heard in the context of their own lives. It promotes a culture of belonging and creates space for deeper connection and authenticity among staff members.

While in committee meetings, White leaders must recognize when and how we are taking space and voice away from our BIPOC Colleagues. When topics of racial equity and inclusion emerge in group discussion, White leaders should intentionally take a step back to allow our colleagues to share their personal experiences and ideas. In doing so, we must listen with humility about how our BIPOC colleagues are experiencing the campus climate and culture. Before speaking, we should pause (yes, pause!) and reflect on our individual thoughts and feelings about how we are experiencing campus as a White people. While speaking, White leaders should amplify and draw attention to the minoritized voices in the space by naming racial distinctions between how BIPOC individuals are experiencing campus and how we, as White people, experience campus. Illuminating and amplifying these racial differences - and most importantly, naming whiteness in the process - is crucial in creating a more inclusive campus environment.

Engaging Other White Leaders

One of the key findings from this study, "one of us," supports DiAngelo's (2011) concept of white solidarity in that White people have an unspoken agreement to protect white advantage and dominance. In order to move from white solidarity and comfort to racial equity and inclusion, White campus activities professionals have a responsibility to engage their White peers in topics related to race. White leaders should strategically name racial dynamics at their institutions and use their own whiteness to actively draw other White people into the conversation. The goal should be to help create awareness and critical consciousness, not to prove a point that we are "good" White people. Consequently, White leaders must make it a priority to speak with White peers rather than at them – something I call informed candidness. Informed candidness is communication that is grounded in humility and vulnerability yet is direct and informed by research or lived experience. When engaging other White leaders about race, we should strive to be critically aware of our whiteness throughout the conversation, yet not pretend to have unrealistic stocks of knowledge around racial equity. Hence, humility and vulnerability are needed in the process. White campus activities professionals should not be afraid of making mistakes with DEI efforts, but when we do reify our whiteness, we must immediately take ownership and not deflect or deny responsibility.

Furthermore, White leaders must focus on challenging whiteness in group settings, especially in committee work, in order to disrupt white solidarity. Simply put, we can no longer tiptoe around race. When we do this, we insulate our whiteness and seek to maintain our own racial comfort (Fine, 1997). The next time we are in a committee or group meeting, and topics of DEI emerge, White leaders should critically interrogate and examine how whiteness flows throughout the space using a critical whiteness lens. For example, ask yourself the following questions: 1) How are other White people in this space exhibiting characteristics (i.e., words, actions, behaviors) that do not align with racial equity and inclusion efforts? 2) How are we (myself included) perpetuating white comfort and solidarity in this space? Once noted, these examples provide opportunities for White campus activities professionals to engage with other White people about whiteness in more deeply and sincere ways. Importantly, these small interventions between White people can lead to a shift in critical consciousness for all parties involved. White campus activities professionals must consistently and explicitly name when and how racial dynamics play out in different spaces - whether in staff meetings, committee meetings, or supervision conversations. Conversations about race are difficult and complex, but they are critical in order to move racial equity efforts forward.

CONCLUSION

The first step in removing the racial smog described by Tatum (1997) in the opening paragraph is for White campus activities professionals to engage in critical reflection and dialogue around race. This means that White people must "come to understand that we are the problem, come to terms with what that really means, and act based on understanding" (Jensen, 2005, p. 93). The responsibility is on us, White campus activities professionals, to examine our own biases and assumptions and challenge our White peers to move beyond white comfort and solidarity. The recommendations offered in this article can assist White professionals with applying critical whiteness theory to our practice and developing critical consciousness to transform our institutions.

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SAYING THE RIGHT THING, DOING THE WHITE THING: PERPETUATING THE ENLIGHTENMENT NARRATIVE IN WHITE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT LEADERS

Pietro A. Sasso, Stephen F. Austin State University
Benjamin Jay Marcy, University of Minnesota-Twin Cities

This phenomenological qualitative study explored the ways undergraduate student leaders engaged in the enlightenment narrative. Eighteen White student leaders from seven higher education institutions were interviewed. Participants engaged in frontstage performances of inclusion by "saying the right thing" to maintain ownership of their leadership positions and differentiate themselves from white peers through a white savior complex. When asked to clarify, they revealed private sentiments of dispossession and fear that some campus equity efforts threatened their leadership positions. This revealed ways in which participants undermined their initial rhetoric of inclusion through "doing the white thing." Implications using Adaptive Leadership theory are provided to suggest how student involvement professionals can challenge White student leaders to confront their own Whiteness and counter forms of white supremacy.

The 1989 Spike Lee film, *Do the Right Thing,* centers on a day in the Black neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn, NY. The summer temperature rises as a metaphor for increasing racial tensions surrounding Sal's Pizzeria, which is owned by a family of White Italian Americans. Tensions explode when Sal, the owner, destroys Radio Raheem's boombox in a fight about the lack of hanging wall pictures of Black celebrities and heroes. Fighting spills onto the streets. Police arrive and choke Radio Raheem until he falls dead on the ground (Flory, 2006).

The police lift Radio Raheem's lifeless body into a squad car and leave the shocked crowd. They demand answers from Sal, in which he sheepishly responds, "You do what you gotta do." Sal defends the police actions, despite all the praise he received from many in the Black community and his own paternalistic words of love for his customers. The crowd, enraged by his response, burns down his pizza shop. The response by Sal was color-evasive (color-blind) and did not recognize the racialized undertones of Radio Raheem's death (Flory, 2006).

Sal positioned himself as one of the "good Whites" throughout the film (Chrisman, 1990; Cooper, 2010). These color-blind responses and paternalistic attitudes toward other Black Americans by White persons is a parallel drawn by other scholars about this film (Cooper, 2010; Manley, 2010). Similarly, on college campuses, color-blind responses and paternalistic attitudes are also common attitudes of White undergraduate student leaders toward other Students of Color (Foste, 2019).

Undergraduate student leadership is a revered status on college campuses as they receive additional support such as individualized advising, early residence move-in, and connections to leadership development (Sasso & Palladini, 2021). Student leaders also populate other student organizations in which they hold multiple leadership roles and can hold significant social influence across undergraduate campus life (Goedereis & Sasso, 2020). Thus, they are asked to serve as student representatives on university committees or are encouraged to enter the profession of student affairs administration as a higher education professional (Sasso & DeVitis, 2015).

Student leaders build social capital and relationships with student affairs personnel throughout their collegiate careers

(Goedereis & Sasso, 2020; Sasso & DeVitis, 2015). Student leadership curricula are often based on the Social Change Model (Komives & Wagner, 2009) or servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). These leadership models have been critiqued as too performative, lacking cultural consciousness, or reinforcing behaviors of Whiteness (Eicher-Catt, 2005; Harper & Kezar, 2021). These approaches to leadership are embedded within programming using white privilege pedagogy which reinforces the notions of there being good White people and bad White people (Sasso et al., 2020). This approach complicates further efforts to challenge the system of white supremacy (DiAngelo, 2011).

White student leaders engage in this *enlightenment narrative* where they position themselves (good) against other uninvolved students (bad) (Foste, 2020). These individualist approaches suggest more performative efforts rather than engaged work to dismantle racial oppression (Lensmire et al., 2013; Levine-Rasky, 2000). Through this title, we suggest that in the enlightenment narrative, White students have been trained to "say the right thing" as student leaders speaking against racism but continue to "do the white thing" in their leadership positions.

This qualitative phenomenological study further explored the enlightenment narrative (Foste 2020a) with a sample of undergraduate white student leaders. The purpose of this study was to identify more specific ways White undergraduate student leaders potentially engaged in the enlightenment narrative. In this article, we intentionally place Whiteness to "reject the grammatical representation of power that capitalization brings to the term 'white'" (Perez Huber, 2010, p. 93). We intentionally capitalize racial identities, including White or Students of Color, to acknowledge the importance of race as a component of student identity (Crenshaw, 1989).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Student Leadership

Student leadership development programs in higher education have grown in the previous two decades (Astin & Astin, 2000; Soria et al., 2018). It has been argued that student leadership development should be the central focus of institutions' leadership initiatives, as students have the greatest potential to lead in the broader society (Astin & Astin, 2000). Leadership development programs in higher education have shown varying outcomes in leadership efficacy among students (Soria et al., 2018)

Student leadership is often socially defined by a formal position and not by the influence of relationships and actions (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). While leadership positions are central to students' understanding of leadership (Astin & Astin, 2000), any student has the potential to be a leader beyond holding a titled role (Komives et al., 2013; Parks, 2005; Werner et al., 2016). Holding a leadership position does not necessarily ensure one will become a good leader (Komives et al., 2013). Still, positional student leaders can "build bridges that connect the various disparate cultures on campus" (Astin & Astin, 2000, p. 18).

The ways in which leadership is understood can vary across students' different campus contexts. The culture of a particular organization can impact how leadership development is executed with the recruitment and shaping of future positional leaders (Komives et al., 2013). Emphasis on leadership development in student affairs helps move students away from seeing their participation in co-curricular activities as only a means to build their résumés (Astin & Astin, 2000). In facilitating leadership development, student affairs professionals can fall into "constraining beliefs" regarding their self-knowledge, commitment, and competence around leadership; this limits student potential (Astin & Astin, 2000, p. 59). This is unfortunate as modeling behavior can greatly impact student leadership development (Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

Student leadership development stresses the need for collaboration across different student organizations to address complex problems (Komives et al., 2013). Students' understanding of other cultural identities became a central point of leadership development (Komives et al., 2013). Current critiques of leadership development programs are increasing and have suggested including a more culturally relevant curriculum in consideration of multiple frames of racial diversity (Harper & Kezar, 2021; Jones et al., 2016).

Whiteness

Several scholars distinguished *Whiteness* from White identity. *White identity* refers to the racial location within the system of Whiteness (Abioye & Sasso, 2023). Leonardo (2009) noted, "whiteness is not a culture but a social concept" (p. 170). Further, Whiteness is a cultural discourse that inoculates privileged behaviors and forms of capital among White undergraduate students (Cabrera, 2018, 2019). As a system, Whiteness lacks intersectionality in that there is an absence of allowing other potential identities that may be marginalized to influence its course; this is an important distinction that Whiteness cannot be oppressed but rather acts only as an oppressor (Cabrera, 2018; Crenshaw, 1989).

Cabrera (2018) distinguished that *Whiteness* is a system of interlocking spheres of oppression. It is historically perpetuated on college campuses by *white supremacy,* which is the larger system of racial oppression that privileges engagement with White students (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Feagin, 2006; Omi & Winant, 2015). Whiteness is often conflated by student affairs professionals as solely an identity construct. This serves White people's inclination to shift Whiteness and racism to an individual identity issue (Harris & Patton, 2018). This creates a binary in their minds of "good and bad," which allows White people to recognize and identify their privileges over those who deny them (Cabrera, 2019). This does not provide an understanding of how their social locations or positionality within the system of Whiteness benefits them (Foste, 2020). These forms of Whiteness enable deflecting conversations and personal accountability for racism in society, known as *white agility* (Cabrera, 2019).

White students also operate with *white immunity,* which describes how they are immune from disparate racial treatment (Cabrera et al., 2017). This idea of white immunity was developed as an evolution of thinking around white privilege (McIntosh, 1988) and considers color-blind racism (Bonilla Silva, 2006) in its ideas. Color-blind racism, also known as color-evasiveness (Annamma et al., 2017), is a structure of racism in which White people claim to not see race and avoid racial topics. With white immunity, White undergraduates minimize racism, frame racist actions as innocuous, underestimate levels of racism and racial tensions, and are socialized in racially homogenous groups in which they experience few racial tensions (Cabrera, 2012; 2014b; 2014c; Chesler et al., 2003; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Reason & Evans, 2007). This privileges White students to stagnate in ignorance, termed *racial arrested development* (Cabrera et al., 2016).

White students who see themselves as "good whites" pride themselves as more racially aware than their White counterparts because they have had specific inclusion education or claim to have diverse friendships (Foste, 2020). This *enlightenment narrative* has been perpetuated, whether inadvertently or intentionally, by student affairs professionals who have primarily used white privilege pedagogy developed by McIntosh (1988) to teach about identity and instruct White students about race (Ashlee et al., 2020). White privilege pedagogy attempts to help students to become aware of their individual privileges in a larger system of Whiteness but permits students to believe they are experiencing a transformation (Margolin, 2014). This is insufficient for student socialization and may increase white immunity to continue the proliferation of Whiteness in higher education (Ashlee et al., 2020).

Whiteness in White Student Leaders

White student leaders have been found to consider themselves to be among the "good whites" on campus (Foste, 2019). They did this by maintaining that their institution is welcoming and promotes notions of racial harmony (Foste, 2019). They engaged in racial narcissism to believe they possessed greater racial exposure; an increased understanding of racial knowledge due to their leadership position (Foste, 2020). White student leaders have been found to hold "white knight" dispositions in which they infantilize other Students of Color and hold paternalistic assumptions in wanting to "save" them (Trepagnier, 2006). When White students feel that Students of Color are present in institutions to serve their own learning and social achievement, it becomes a form of *Whiteness as property* (Cabrera, 2011; Gusa, 2010; Harris et al., 2019; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Centering their development of a positive White racial identity perpetuates Whiteness at the expense of subverting racist structures, particularly because they feel they should not bear the obligation of educating their White peers (Foste, 2020). Any challenges to this hegemony feed sentiments of dispossession in which White students feel they cannot exact their privilege, and instead, they externalize blame because they cannot assume "property of power" (Harris et al., 2019; Sasso, 2019).

Foste (2020a) suggested White student leaders perceived social justice and inclusion as a measurable and achievable endpoint, rather than as a continual process of self-work. Additionally, these leaders often engage in frontstage and backstage performances of racism (Ashlee et al., 2020). The concepts of frontstage and backstage racism refer to how White individuals conduct themselves in front of Persons of Color (Picca & Feagin, 2007). In their desire to avoid the label of racist, they often make claims of awareness to be "woke" (Foste & Jones, 2020). Yet, they continually contradict their own understanding with racially ignorant rhetoric (Foste & Jones, 2020). White student leaders were unable to identify their own racial location within the system of white supremacy and engage in backstage racism (Foste & Jones, 2020).

White student leaders will avoid topics of race or assume post-racial perspectives when Students of Color are present and engage and use racial epithets when they are absent (Picca & Feagin, 2007). White students engage in racial joking as the most common example of backstage racism and do not actively label these behaviors as racist (Cabrera, 2014a; Joyce & Cawthon, 2017). Also, White student leaders can frame themselves as victims of racial diversity in their campus environment in primarily White spaces (Cabrera, 2014b; 2014c). This becomes the excuse for racist logics and ideologies, particularly among White student leaders (Cabrera & Corces-Zimmerman, 2017). Without intervention in backstage environments, there will be continued centering of white racial comfort (Cabrera et al., 2016; Gusa, 2010). This will perpetuate racial arrested development among White student leaders and negatively impact racial campus climate (Cabrera et al., 2016).

METHODS

This was a phenomenological qualitative study that followed the research design of similar previous studies (Cabrera, 2012; 2016; Foste, 2019, 2020; Sasso et al., 2022). We specifically selected descriptive phenomenology because it centers participant experiences and voice, allowing the researchers to understand how these perceptions and experiences related to the phenomenon (Giorgi, 2009). Giorgi (2009) suggested that this approach places emphasis on the words expressed by the participants and not their own interpretations. In this study, the enlightenment narrative (Foste, 2020a) was the phenomenon, with the primary research question: In what ways do White undergraduate student leaders persist the enlightenment narrative on campus to engage in inclusion performativity as unconscious behaviors of Whiteness?

Participants

A snowball sampling method was used to recruit initial participants through social media to construct a homogenous sample of White student leaders (n=18) from seven different institutions(Jones et al., 2014). No gatekeepers were used to reduce sampling bias, and initial participants identified others to ensure authenticity (Jones et al., 2014; Patton, 2015). As a phenomenological study, participants must have experience with the phenomenon of student leadership, but did not need prior experiences with race, class, or other social identities. For the purposes of this study, all participants had to identify as White with active membership in a campus-recognized student organization or engagement program and must be between the ages of 19-23. All participants were given individual pseudonyms to protect confidentiality, but were free to select their own multiple identities (see Table 1). Institutional types are included to demonstrate the snowball sampling, but are not included as a unit of analysis in this study.

Table 1. *Participant Demographic Summary*

Participant	Academic Level	Major	Gender	Leadership Position	Institution
Carl	Freshman	Psychology	Male	Fraternity Vice President	Large State Flagship
Ashleigh	Freshman	Business	Female	Student Government Association President	Liberal Arts
Lacey	Junior	Engineering	Female	Sorority President	Large State Flagship
Bryan	Senior	Business	Male	Resident Assistant	Residential Liberal Arts
Jackson	Sophomore	Social Work	Male	Freshman Orientation Leader	Large State Flagship
Ryder	Senior	Human Services	Non-Binary	Peer Health Educator	Liberal Arts
Chadwick	Freshman	Leadership	Male	Fraternity Council President	Engineering/Technology
Brian	Sophomore	Business	Male	Resident Assistant	Liberal Arts
Hollie	Sophomore	Gender Studies	Female	Freshman Orientation Leader	Engineering/Technology
Amanda	Junior	Sociology	Female	Student Government Association Secretary	Large State Flagship
Emilee	Sophomore	Engineering	Female	Freshman Orientation Leader	Rural Regional Comprehensive
Augustus	Junior	Theater	Non-Binary	Sorority Vice President	Rural Regional Comprehensive
Samantha	Freshman	Music	Female	Resident Assistant	Urban Regional Comprehensive
Brittany	Sophomore	Psychology	Female	Marching Band Leader	Engineering/Technology
Grayson	Senior	Accounting	Male	Intramurals Coordinator	Private Faith-Based
Amie	Junior	Forestry	Female	Service Sorority President	Engineering/Technology
Reagan	Sophomore	Education	Female	Student Government Association Vice President	Private Faith-Based
Camila	Senior	Education	Female	Service Organization President	Urban Regional Comprehensive

Positionality

Foste (2020b) suggested a process of reflexivity when engaging in research examining systems of Whiteness. Therefore, the primary researcher engaged in a process of considering their own positionalities to avoid complicity and avoid cultivating White comfort, as suggested by Foste (2020b). The authors recognize their intersecting identities hold power in the broader society, and it is our responsibility to use them in the advocacy of social justice. The researchers are male-identified and cisgender across different intersectional identities, which include Latino and White. As systems of oppression constantly reinforce dehumanizing patterns of behavior (Leonardo, 2009), we acknowledge our respective positionalities limit our perspectives and require us to continually examine and reconstruct new ways of being that promote healing and liberation.

Data Collection

Data collection methods used included 60 to 120-minute interviews using a semi-structured interview guide and a demographic questionnaire completed by participants (available upon request). The interview guide was developed by the primary researcher and validated by subject-matter experts. Questions asked participants about their experiences with involvement, campus inclusion, and Students of Color. Interviews continued until a point of saturation (Jones et al., 2014). All participants were interviewed on campus in predetermined safe spaces that included on-campus housing or the student union. All interview transcripts were professionally transcribed to prepare for data analysis.

Data Analysis

Using descriptive phenomenology, data was interpreted through the interpretive relativist ontology paradigm, which assumes researchers cannot separate from previous and existing knowledge (Angen, 2000). Researchers' positionalities were present in all phases of the research process. Relativist ontology holds that reality as we know it is subjectively constructed through socially and experientially developed understandings and meanings (Angen, 2000). The researchers used theoretical assumptions of systemic racism to not dismiss lived experiences of participants and to recognize that privileges of Whiteness are frequently invisible to the beneficiaries of the system because of the racist and sexist context of these data (Cabrera, 2015; 2016; Foste, 2020).

The researchers followed Moustakas' (1999) guidelines for conducting phenomenological research to analyze the data. The first phase *epoche* located previous assumptions about White student leaders through reflexive journaling (Ortlipp, 2008). The second phase, *horizons of experience,* developed a list of initial open codes (Moustakas, 1994). Open codes were developed through textural and structural descriptions. Textural descriptions were specific language from the participants to show how they were discussing the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Structural descriptions were based on researcher interpretations of the participants' language.

The researchers utilized axial coding to group open codes into more abstract and complex categories (Saldaña, 2021). Finally, *imaginative variation* (Moustakas, 1994) was implemented to narrow the ways participants demonstrated the enlightenment narrative, and selective coding was applied (Jones et al., 2014; Saldana, 2021). Final themes were organized using code mapping validated by an external auditor as part of trustworthiness strategies (Saldana, 2021).

Trustworthiness

The researchers addressed the standards of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to facilitate trustworthiness (Jones et al., 2014). Credibility was met through member checking. The researchers incorporated Foste's (2020b) guidance on intentional member checking so as to not amplify participants' potential binary understandings of racism but as a means of "chipping away at the white racial ignorance" (p. 13). The researchers followed the tenets of descriptive phenomenology by providing a transcript of their interviews and a preliminary thematic analysis (Giorgi, 2009). Participants did not ask for changes or disagree with the data analysis.

Transferability was met by providing long and rich quotes for readers to interpret and reflect on their own interactions with White student leaders. Dependability was met by keeping an audit log of research activities and documents (Jones et al., 2014). Confirmability was used by keeping a reflexive journal and using an external auditor who validated the themes. The external auditor, a student affairs/higher education researcher, examined the veracity of the themes, where the researchers accepted necessary feedback to ensure participant voices were sacrosanct.

FINDINGS

Saying the Right Thing

Through interviews with White student leaders, themes regarding saying the right thing and doing the white thing were salient. Within saying the right thing, several sub-themes were noted, including "we are diverse here, let me tell you how" and "I'm not a racist, I'm a nonracist and I can prove it." There was a tendency for the participants to prove their claims through internal checklists and always to center themselves in being able to say what they believe is the right thing.

We Are Diverse Here, Let Me Tell You How. Participants insistently named diversity as a value on their campus by highlighting different programs and initiatives. They suggested that because their campus had people of diverse racial backgrounds or preoccupied with inclusion, their institution could not be racist. When asked about their institution's large policy or systemic efforts, many could only point to smaller programming: e.g., identity awareness months, food festivals, or student diversity trainings. Some identified policies within their student organization: e.g., non-discrimination clauses, open membership, and new diversity/inclusion leadership po-

sitions. Lacey added: "My panhellenic sorority has a recruitment and diversity chair for our NPC [National Panhellenic Council] now. We are making such progress to better get with the times."

Participants romanticized the idea of studying at an institution with a diverse learning environment. Amanda believed that other White students who were oblivious to the number of Students of Color were racist. Yet, her own racist stereotypes revealed her level of awareness. Amanda suggested:

> My campus has a ton of minority students. I see it in the general ed classes and when I walk around campus. I don't know how you can't notice it. You have to be racist to ignore it. They are loud and everywhere on campus in the residence halls and in the dining halls too.

Participants also posited that their campus was one of the "good ones" because they perceived it as being racially diverse and, therefore, they could not be racist. However, all the participants described ways in which Students of Color have "their own" spaces on campus, such as student organizations. Chadwick painted his racially harmonious campus life:

> I do not think my college has a real race issue. We all just kind of get along all the time. I do not hear a lot of racist stuff like the N-word or whatever. Black and Latino students are really represented in catalogs, tour guides, and as student leaders. We have a lot of Black Greek orgs too. We have a lot of cultural orgs and a multicultural office just for them.

Their acknowledgment and recognition of racial diversity were enough for them to consider their campus was collectively not racist. Participants acknowledged that there were larger racial justice movements beyond the campus, but felt incongruence in relation to their campus experience. Lacey noted that Black Lives Matter Movement and other campus protests made her very uncomfortable. She shared that she posted on social media asking Friends of Color if they needed support, and could not understand why they were annoyed with her. Amie also discussed her experience with Black Lives Matter issues:

> I feel like campus changed after BLM and it got so cheugy [gross] and cringy, like you could feel the tensions between White students and our Black students. But I participated in sustained dialogue groups, and I kind of better understand from them some things I may have done or said in the past. But, like, I think the diversity on our campus is huge and taught us all something about us.

She and others believed they benefited from learning about diversity through these issues, which made them better people. This maintained their positive sentiments about racial campus climate. When challenged further, participants were defensive about maintaining a white savior identity.

I'm Not Racist, I'm Nonracist, I Can Prove It. Participants did not want to be labeled as a racist, seen as displaying racist behavior, or socially connected to explicitly racist people. They felt able to process their behaviors of Whiteness and justify their claims through various efforts of correct or corrected behavior by others. Brittany, a marching band leader, added that "I don't associate with White trash and some others like in my band who voted for Trump. I try not to talk politics with them or ignore them cause they are total cringe and racist."
Many would tabulate their friendships or relationships with Students of Color as justification for not being racist. As an example, Brian stated, "I do not think I am racist. I have dated other women of other cultures, like Asian women, and my roommate is part Black."

Beyond not being labeled racist, many participants wanted to be identified as nonracist. Many felt they could achieve this through a sort of an equation by attending diversity-focused programming. If they simply added up enough programs, they would reach a nonracist label. Samantha highlighted this diversity equation:

> We have a halal oven in the main dining hall, we offer Safe Zone training, and all of the RA's have mandatory diversity training. I did tunnel of oppression and some privilege walks. We really have made progress for inclusion here, I feel.

Other participants believed associating with certain student organizations would equate them as nonracist. Affiliated participants often discussed Black or Latinx members in their sororities or fraternities. They noted how their organizations held non-discrimination clauses, open membership, and new diversity/inclusion leadership

positions. Many participants described similar efforts in their organizations that would earn them the label of nonracist. These include committee work, facilitating training, or inviting Students of Color into their organizations. Reagan, involved in student government, stated:

> I sat on a committee as a student for our college diversity statement and for our inclusive residence life guidelines. They are so powerful and make me feel that I am helping and saving our students from racism that comes from off campus.

The participants sought positions that made them appear to support campus diversity efforts. Participants felt confident about being able to identify racism in their peers. They cited examples of when other White friends would actively exclude Students of Color, use racist language, or have political opinions about race. Yet, beyond the identification and saying they understood racism, there was limited proof of action to stop racism. When asked how they intervened with racist behavior among their friends, many felt stymied. They were uncertain about how to change their White friends' behaviors and thoughts. Most could not recall instances of interventions with their friends, believing they had just avoided the issue. Rather they believed they just avoided those conversations with them instead. The deeper push for further understanding of participants' rhetoric and interrogation of their saying of the right thing led to greater defensiveness. This began revealing how their actions continued to uphold Whiteness.

Doing the White Thing

Further inquiry revealed participants' actions were in conflict with their nonracist rhetoric. This was notable in two key ways. First, participants revealed they were engaging in diversity training as a form of compliance rather than with a growth mindset. Sentiments of these training sessions ranged from confusion to animosity. Second, participants positioned themselves as the good White in a "white knight" savior complex by infantilizing Students of Color and minimizing campus racism. They recentered themselves when questioned about racist incidents on campus by dismissing their ponderosity while holding animosity towards Students of Color's concerns.

Diversity Programming as Compliance. Participants had contentious relationships with diversity training and inclusion initiatives. There was little concern about the challenges Students of Color might be encountering, which was a paradox because participants wanted to demonstrate how diverse their relationships were and for others to notice their proximity to them. They became frustrated when their presence or efforts were not publicly glorified. Camila noted, "I am a campus leader, so I can use my white privilege to help Black students. I marched in the BLM campus protests this year, and everyone got annoyed with me because I was up front."

When discussing programs that dealt with diversity and inclusion, all participants suggested participating in such programs made them feel guilty or awful about themselves. Many felt that participation was a necessary compliance process rather than an opportunity for their own growth. Other participants feared not complying. Grayson suggested, "Look, I am a white dude and will get canceled, and I also just want to do the right thing." Still, others felt far more animosity about the programming in place. Emilee shared:

> All these diversity programs and speakers tell me to check my privilege. They call me a white supremacist and discuss all this jargon about intersectionality. I feel it's all bullshit when they get stuff because of the color of their skin, like scholarships or their own student center.

While some changed their perspectives through this programming, changes were limited to such instances as a student organization constitution or bylaws. Participants shared they struggled to integrate their learning about inclusion into their internal equation to reach a nonracist label. Even when looking at individual accountability, participants could identify racism in their peers but not their own complicity in a larger system of Whiteness on their campus. In fact, some participants suggested diversity training helped them see how they, as White students, have been marginalized and what had been dispossessed from them as student leaders. They centered their own efforts as a means to make "real change" when other students got in the way. Ashleigh added:

> I get kind of pissed off when other students tell me our campus does not do enough to help minority students. Our campus is so much better than the other [campus removed], where they have Nazi symbols and confederate flags in the dorms.

Participants generally felt a growing dispossession of influence and were confused about what role they were supposed to serve on their campus. Augustus shared this perspective:

> There are these campus activists who just get in the fucking way all the damn time. They just bitch, and it feels like "oppression Olympics." Most of these supposedly 'woke folk' are just rich hippie snobs with white guilt. Like, remember that you are white and taking up space from people who can actually do something like me.

Participants frequently positioned themselves in comparison to others regarding the good versus bad white polemic. Participants shared that they were tired of focusing so much of their efforts on diversity and inclusion. They offered post-racial and color-evasive perspectives to suggest a potential return to a perceived normalcy where race is not a consideration. This sentiment revealed several cases of invalidating the experiences and leadership experiences of Students of Color.

Invalidating Efforts of Student Leaders of Color. With confusion and frustration directed at diversity programming, similar feelings were directed toward Students of Color on campus. While participants were careful to indicate that they were friends with Students of Color, many felt those friends received more of these benefits than they did as White students. Ryder described their frustration:

> I am confused why I am still a poor white person from a hick town, and I don't get shit, when I have Black friends and they get so much much more than me, like their own sororities and college programs.

The participants believed that student Leaders of Color received benefits such as targeted programs and support offices. The participants discussed how these changes on campus benefited these Students of Color, but then negatively impacted them. The participants deflected any critical assessment of these views, and many named these circumstances as a form of reverse discrimination. Chadwick also stated again:

> I am tired of all this politically correct bullshit. How can we be racist when we gave all of our benefits away to other minorities? I get less financial aid, and everyone thinks I am a bad guy now as a white male. I mean if anything, Black students and other minorities are racist against me. It's reverse discrimination.

Many of the students used color-blind or post-racial logics again in their description of campus diversity and inclusion policies to question their validity. None of the participants discussed meritocracy or a "hard work ethic" in which Students of Color must earn their benefits.

Participants understood concepts of affirmative action and similar policies, often through diversity training. They generally approved of these policies but thought they were not relevant to their own contexts because they believed their generation had overcome the need to apply these policies. The reasons for this varied. Jackson used multiraciality as a post-racial logic and reason for hope:

> Look at all the mixed students and adopted ones with different parents on campus now. They are the future. I mean feel like BLM [Black Lives Matter] had it wrong when we are seeing this progress.

Participants spoke of the importance of supporting Students of Color and often felt they should use what Carl stated as "what they already gave them," referring to student centers and White student leaders' presence as allies. While perhaps feeling they were supportive, these White student leaders revealed ways they had, consciously or not, undermined the efforts of Students of Color.

DISCUSSION

White student leaders in this study followed a post-racial logic of "you do what you gotta do" (Lee, 1989) to justify the ways in which they perpetuated white supremacy in innocuous ways. They positioned themselves as "good whites" at their institutions which they purport to welcome and support diversity. In *Do The Right Thing,* Sal is friendly for the benefit of his business, despite his derogatory remarks about the Black neighborhood (Cooper, 2010; Manley, 2010). Similarly, participants in this study made frontstage performance by *saying the right thing* celebrating diversity and inclusion with private performances of backstage racism by undercutting and demeaning campus diversity efforts by *doing the white thing*.

In *saying the right thing,* students were unaware of the incongruence between their backstage and frontstage performances. They learned only through White privilege pedagogy which contextualized racism as individual behavior centered on speech and rhetoric rather than conceptualizing how white supremacy interlocks oppressions through laws, policies, and cultural practices (Cabrera, 2012; 2018; Cabrera & Corces-Zimmerman, 2017). Rather, this approach allows students to "check off boxes" of marginalization to assume a class minority identity which facilitates punitive, self-righteous orientations toward other white students or other student Leaders of Color (Ashlee et al., 2020; Foste, 2020; Sasso et al., 2022). Thus, these students feel pressure to prove they are antiracist allies, i.e., "doing the right thing" (Foste, 2019, 2020b; Sasso et al., 2022).

By also *doing the right thing,* participants did not see their white racial consciousness as a continual process of self-work (Ashlee et al., 2020). To these student leaders, social justice and inclusion were achievable endpoints, and their inclusion performativity perpetuated an enlightenment narrative (Foste, 2019, 2020b). White student leaders perpetuated racial harmony narratives because they felt institutional diversity programming and racial representation absolved them from being racist and identified them as "good whites."

In *doing the white thing,* students felt guilty about their own Whiteness and infantilized by diversity training. They learned white privilege pedagogy, developed by McIntosh (1988), through exercises such as the invisible knapsack. The intention is for students to become aware of their individual privileges. However, these sorts of curricula do contextualize how a larger system of Whiteness may contribute to the continued proliferation of white supremacy in higher education (Ashlee et al., 2020). White privilege pedagogy does not provide students the opportunity to engage in a critical examination of Whiteness in which students have limited opportunity for conversations about race and racism (Cabrera & Corces-Zimmerman, 2017). Its programmatic efficaciousness has been rooted in allowing students to engage in a critical examination of their racial identities (Lensmire et al., 2013; Levine-Rasky, 2000).

Limitations

The transferability limitations of this study included boundaries of this study to other white student leaders. There were demand characteristics presented by the researchers who have professional *a priori* knowledge about student involvement, but not with the individual lived experiences of the participants. This depth of understanding may have influenced the full disclosure of information by participants and influenced participants to engage in frontstage performances with interviewers. This study also did not account for the individual differences in the purpose and meaning of the racialized narratives and perspectives. Despite these limitations, the researchers anticipate the data collected can provide insight into White student leaders' use of enlightenment narrative. The researchers also recognize that this research may perpetuate a continued focus on Whiteness and the importance of voice for historically marginalized communities (Foste, 2020b). Future research should explore their perceptions and experiences with the enlightenment narrative.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

This study has significant implications for practice for student involvement professionals. These implications are framed through Adaptive Leadership theory which identifies how humans lead by adapting through changes in the systems in which we live and thrive (Heifetz et al., 2009). In this framework, there are *technical* and *adaptive* approaches to challenges.

Avoid Technical Approaches

Technical approaches rely on current knowledge and provide solutions to problems in ways already understood. For example, certain surgeries which were once groundbreaking adaptive approaches are now considered technical because doctors understand how to implement the solution (Heifetz et al., 2009). The idea of a check-box approach, as participants understood diversity programming, highlights students' technical mindsets. White privilege pedagogy, once an adaptive change in language and rhetoric pedagogy, may now be a technical act that avoids deeper behavioral change.

Student involvement professionals should be mindful of relying on forms of white privilege pedagogy. These may create changes in White students' language, but the approach entices White student leaders to claim marginality and which they use to absolve them from being racist (Ashlee et al., 2020). Events that use this pedagogy typically include one-time events (e.g., "privilege walks," "tunnel of oppression") in which White students learn at the expense of working-class students or Students of Color or which they use to check a box of "understanding" (Ashlee et al., 2020). Additionally, technical approaches can act as means of lowering tension when faced with making real change (Heifetz et al., 2009), which potentially perpetuates white comfort over directly addressing racism (Abioye & Sasso, 2023; Applebaum, 2010; Sasso et al., 2022).

Use Adaptive Approaches

Adaptive approaches to challenges require new learning and experimentation through diverse perspectives and necessary time. Along with this, Heifetz et al. (2009) described that "resistance to change stems from the fear of losing something important" (p. 96). Professionals must consider how much ambiguity, disequilibrium, and potential loss will be allowed by an individual or organization to enact change (Heifetz et al., 2009). Participants in this study would be more likely to engage in a technical response, given their dispossession sentiments. However, White student leaders should be encouraged to question their own experiences and how they may be perpetuating an enlightenment narrative.

White student leaders have likely not engaged in an adaptive process of facing this question for themselves. As Cabrera (2012) suggested, "working through whiteness is not an end met, but a continual process engaged" (p. 397), there need to be increased and continuous opportunities for White student leaders to further understand their positionality within Whiteness beyond simply their privileges (Abioye & Sasso, 2023). Thus, programs can use adaptive leadership concepts of observation, interpretation, and intervention (Heifetz et al., 2009) to constantly assess evolving Whiteness (Cabrera, 2012; Leonardo, 2009).

In doing this, student involvement professionals must construct the holding environments for White students so they may confront their own Whiteness (Abioye & Sasso, 2023). For some, this will be reckoning with their own self-conceptualization of being a "good white" and perpetuating "doing the white thing." For other white student leaders, there is the potential for real harm (social, emotional, and possibly physical) from other white peers and family if they take up an antiracist approach (Thandeka, 1999). This work may potentially make White students feel threatened by their own self conceptualizations, as previous iterations of diversity and inclusion programming made them feel excluded (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Cabrera, 2014a; 2014b; 2014c).

Student involvement professionals should be mindful in their approach. Comprehensive leadership programs should include socially responsible or culturally inclusive leadership development models to foster intercultural understanding and humanize the experiences across identities (Dugan & Komives, 2010; Morgan et al., 2015; Zimmerman et al., 2018). While helping White student leaders consider diversity and inclusion programming as a continuously evolving professional sensibility, student involvement professionals should not let such work turn into white confessionals of admitting racism to gain validation and affirmation (Foste & Whitehead, 2022).

The Role of Student Involvement Professionals

To some extent, student involvement professionals have succeeded in overcoming the adaptive challenge of how white student leaders talk about race and diversity through white privilege pedagogy (Abioye & Sasso, 2023; Ashlee et al., 20202). While public language, i.e., "saying the right thing" has shifted, changing racist actions, i.e., "doing the white thing," is a continuing adaptive challenge for White student leaders. However, student involvement professionals must also consider and acknowledge the potential losses they face, within their departments, in taking on adaptive leadership work.

With all change, there is an element of loss (Heifetz et al., 2009). The potential loss of racist perspectives is a welcome outcome of this work. However, student involvement professionals should consider that more obvious losses may include professional capital, time to devise and execute intervention, or even student partici-

pation. These potential pitfalls have a greater risk for those professionals from marginalized identities (Boat-wright-Hororwitz, 2013).

Additionally, potential losses may not be immediately perceived by student involvement professionals. Engaging in work that challenges a campus image as not being racially harmonious may challenge other higher education professionals' sense of their professional identity, causing a sense of loss of competency. This may cause resistance from unlikely spaces within an institution (Boatwright-Hororwitz, 2013). Student involvement professionals should be ready to acknowledge these losses, whether real or imagined, to build political buy-in from various campus stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

White student leaders of this study were conscious of their frontstage performance in "saying the right thing" but were defensive when confronted with their actions of "doing the white thing." In *Do the Right Thing,* Sal upheld an enlightenment narrative feeling no one should dispossess him of his business in the neighborhood. Much like Sal, white students feared displacement from campus equity and diversity programs. Since many student involvement professionals are White, it is important to support them in unpacking and questioning their own experiences. This will aid in ending problematic practices such as white privilege pedagogy which reinforces the enlightenment narrative, dispossession, and backstage racism. Future research should consider the limitations of this research study and explore adaptive leadership practices that demonstrate promise in increasing White racial consciousness in undergraduate student leaders.

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JCAPS

VOICES OF FIRST-GENERATION TRANSFER STUDENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SUPPORT SERVICES

Francine Rudd Coston, University of Massachusetts Lowell

This study explored the lived experiences of first-generation transfer students (FGTS) and their utilization of support structures at a mid-size, public university in New England. Using Schlossberg's Transition Theory as a framework, this case study presents results that sought to center the voices of FGTS as it relates to the support services they utilize. In addition to the FGTS experiences, the case included interviews with university staff members and analyses of institutional documents. Implications for higher education institutions to better support first-generation transfer students are discussed.

Researchers have documented that first-generation college students, or students whose parents/guardians do not have bachelor's degrees, graduate at lower rates than students whose families include college graduates (D'Amico & Dika, 2014; Jehangir et al., 2012). Nearly 50% of all college students are First-generation (FG) and of these students, 34% attend four-year institutions. A disproportionate number are students of color or students from low-income backgrounds (Hebert, 2018). In addition to their race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status (SES), and parental educational level, FG students tend to have higher economic barriers, increased dropout rates, or difficulty adapting to the college environment.

The demographics and outcomes for FG students parallel those found within the transfer student population. Of the 21 million students enrolled in higher education institutions (2009), 11.8 million enrolled at community colleges (Ampaw et al., 2015). Many of these students are low-income, minority, and/or first-generation. Approximately 24% of all students who begin their academic careers at community colleges transfer to four-year institutions (Wang et al., 2017). Furthermore, of those community college students who successfully transfer, only 6% earn bachelor's degrees (Shaw & Chin-Newman, 2017).

First-generation student research typically focuses on levels of academic preparation prior to entering college (Atherton, 2014; Boden, 2011; D'Amico & Dika, 2013), while research on transfer students centers mainly on declining grade point average (GPA) after the first semester (Laanan et al., 2010; Strayhorn 2007). While research exists about first-generation students and transfer students, little is known about the experiences of students who are both First-generation *and* transfer students. This study highlighted the experiences of first-generation transfer students (FGTS) and the support structures they utilize at a four-year university.

What the Research Tells Us about First-Generation Students

Considering effective services for FGTS, it is worthwhile reviewing current programs and strategies. The literature on first-generation college students often concentrates on the lack of students' academic preparedness (Atherton, 2014; Boden, 2011; D'Amico & Dicka, 2013; Strayhorn, 2007). Studies about FG students have since expanded to include articles on the institutional support structures that enhance students' sense of belonging (Becker et al., 2017; Means & Pyne, 2017; Strebleton et al., 2014). For this article, sense of belonging refers "to a feeling of connectedness that one is important or matters to others" (Strayhorn, 2012, p.3). Sense of belonging tends to be lower among FG students, particularly those who live off campus and have limited opportunities for academic

and social engagement (Strebleton et al., 2014). Support structures, including student organizations and social base centers on campus, may encourage FG students to feel like they matter, which has a significant impact on their sense of belonging (Means & Pyne, 2017). Academic enrichment programs designed to support FG students' mental well-being and sense of belonging tend to help counter possible obstacles (Becker et al., 2017).

In addition to examining FG's sense of belonging, research pertaining to FG students' lived experiences regarding persistence and graduation has recently expanded (Demetriou et al., 2017; Jehangir, 2010; Jehangir et al., 2012). The divide between the home and school worlds of FG students can cause many to feel their experiences, ideas, and life stories do not matter in college. As a result, FG students feel limited in their learning opportunities and engagement (Jehangir, 2008). Jehangir's (2010) longitudinal study on FG low-income students revealed a need to connect their lived experiences and learning experiences. Incorporating students' lived experiences into the learning process not only sustains the FG students who may have been otherwise silent but strengthens their connections to higher education pedagogy and curriculum.

In a follow-up study, Jehangir, Williams, and Jeske (2012) challenged the isolation and marginalization experienced by FG low-income students at a large, predominately white university. Through contextualizing and deepening discussions on critical issues like race, class, and gender roles FG students demonstrated how their experiences enrich classroom learning. For this enrichment to consistently occur, FG students require their lived experiences intentionally be recognized in the curriculum. Demetriou, Meece, Eaker-Rich, and Powell (2017) conducted an empirical investigation into FG low-income students and how their experiences support their retention and completion of college. Data collected was utilized to develop and implement FG student retention strategies which included social engagement programs. Participation in high-impact socially engaged programs, including living-learning communities, faculty-mentored research, and study abroad profoundly impacted First-generation students' success (Pike & Kuh, 2005).

What the Research Tells Us about Transfer Students

Existing literature reveals that transfer student research has a long history. The first research study was published in the 1920s. Scholars focused on students who transferred from junior colleges to four-year universities (also known as receiving institutions). The studies centered on the comparison of the transfer student to that of the 'native' students, i.e., students starting at the four-year institution as a freshman (Jain et al., 2016; Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010). In the 1960s, transfer student studies expanded when researchers found students experienced a decline in their GPA after the first semester at the new/receiving institution. They labeled this phenomenon 'transfer shock' and it remains the focus of numerous articles for the last 50 years (Laanan et al., 2010).

Over the last decade, there has been an increase in the number of students enrolling at community colleges with the intent to transfer to four-year institutions (Strempel, 2013). The increase in community college enrollment correlates with the transfer student enrollment at four-year institutions. The surge in numbers has once again expanded research opportunities.

Existing literature centered on transfer students' engagement and involvement, paying specific attention to how students rated their educational experience once at the receiving institution (D'Amico et al., 2014; Ishitani & McKitrick, 2010; Lester et al., 2013). Ishitani and McKtrick (2010) found that community college transfer students were less socially engaged than their native peers, which had an impact on their retention at the four-year institution. D'Amico, Dika, Elling, Algozzine, and Ginn (2014) uncovered that integration at four-year institutions for transfer students was closely related to academic engagement, not social involvement. Involvement in clubs and organizations was not as important to transfer students. Lack of involvement did not have a negative impact on their engagement, nor their sense of belonging. They discovered academic engagement, not social engagement, could be achieved through educationally meaningful assignments. Establishing connections to faculty members proved a better indicator of student retention and success.

While research dedicated to understanding the various types of support services designed for first-generation student or transfer students remains critical, studies designed to comprehend services that support both First-gener-

ation and transfer students (FGTS) is limited. Despite their increasing numbers at four-year colleges and universities, FGTS have lower graduation rates and could benefit from additional support (Lester et al., 2013; Stebleton et al., 2014). Moreover, since their multiple identities present challenges, FGTS are likely to experience greater barriers and have more unique needs than their peers who are either First-generation or transfer, but not both.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For this study, I employed Schlossberg's Transition Theory (1981, 1984). Schlossberg's theory defines a person's capacity to cope with transition or 'taking stock' of coping resources in terms of four factors referred to as the 'Four S' (Anderson et al., 2011; Killam & Degges-White, 2017; McCoy, 2014). The Four S, viewed as assets and/or liabilities are (1) *situation* – the time in which the transition occurs; (2) *self* – the person's identity and level of optimism when dealing with change; (3) *support* – resources, people, services that strengthen and encourage persons in transition; (4) *strategies* – the coping resources the student brings to the transition (Killam & Degges-White, 2017).

Schlossberg's theory provides a framework in which FGTS are perceived as students in transition. This structure allowed me to understand FGTS' experiences as they relate to persistence and success and how they intersected with the institutional support services provided (Griffin & Gilbert, 2015). Schlossberg's theory provided me with a lens through which I could explore because it shaped the study by 'taking stock' or identifying the potential resources students already possess that help them cope with transition (Killam & Degges-White, 2017, p. 25).

METHODOLOGY

I chose an exploratory qualitative case study design because of my interest in understanding the lived experiences of FGTS and what institutional support services they utilized when persisting toward graduation. Following the traditional qualitative constructivist format, the study incorporated multiple sources of data, inductive data analysis, and participants' meaning (Creswell, 2007). The study was bounded by a single case at a four-year university conducted during the 2019 fall academic semester. Consistent with the case study design, interviews, and focus groups were conducted, as well as an analysis of documents and materials (Creswell, 2007; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The study was limited to the FGTS students who transferred from community colleges or other four-year universities. The study was limited to faculty, staff, and higher education administrators who had direct interaction with transfer students.

I conducted three student focus groups lasting approximately 90 minutes, three individual staff interviews lasting approximately 45 minutes each, and analyzed seven documents. The detailed data collection from these multiple sources allows for the assembling of rich, thick, descriptive data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

The focus group and interviews were all audio recorded. The participants' responses were then transcribed verbatim, analyzed through coding, and organized into themes. The focus groups comprised of eight students yielded data on how FGTS described their experiences. As a method the use of semi-structured interviews allowed staff to discuss specific topics about FGTS. The use of an interview guide allowed me to ask a list of predefined opened and closed-ended questions. These protocols offered me chances to gain new perspectives regarding FGTS experiences. Finally, documents reviewed focused on materials, handouts, and the university website paying particular attention to themes and codes that emerged from the focus groups and interviews.

Population and Setting

The study was conducted at a mid-sized, four-year public university in New England. Transfer students at the University comprise nearly 50% of the 11,000 undergraduate student population. System-wide first-generation data had just started to be collected in Fall 2018 for first-year students revealing that 39% of the first-year students were First-generation. This data allows the University to estimate the percentage of total FG students at the university. These data align with the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) that finds First-generation students make up 34% of U.S. undergraduates enrolled in postsecondary institutions (Cataldi et al., 2018).

Participants

I recruited participants through email, referral, and snowball sampling. I utilized purposive sampling to recruit FGTS participants for focus groups. As a Student Affairs professional, my knowledge of the faculty, staff, and administrators at the university allowed for the recruitment of institutional agents to participate in the semi-structured interviews (Bensimon, et al., 2019). I recruited agents whom I believed had knowledge of transfer students' characteristics and who appeared to know how to best support these students. I sent recruitment emails to transfer students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

The final sample comprised of eight transfer students who self-identified as being First-generation, six of whom transferred from community colleges and two from other 4-year institutions (*Table 1*). The three higher education professionals included an Assistant Director in Career Services, a Coordinator of Advising & Tutoring Services, and a Director of Enrollment and Student Success.

Table 1. *Focus Group Student Demographics*

Name	Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Academic Level	Major	Transfer From
Bin	Asian	Male	25	Senior	Computer Science	Community College
Billy	Asian	Male	20	Junior	Business	4 yr. university
Claudia	Latina	Female	22	Senior	Business	Community College
Diana	Latina	Female	34	Grad	Community Psychology	Community College
Destiny	Latina	Female	22	Senior	Biology	4 yr. university
Edina	Multi-Race	Female	34	Grad	Community Psychology	Community College
Maria	Multi-Race	Female	24	Grad	Community Psychology	Community College
Montana	White	Female	19	Sophomore	Business	Community College

Positionality and Trustworthiness

For this study, I position myself through the lens of a first-generation female of color (Creswell, 2007). Noting my position as a practitioner whose research and administrative work focuses on understanding the experiences of historically underrepresented students, I remained mindful of how my identity and experience could shape my interpretation of the data. To establish credibility, I triangulated the data. I created research questions for different participants and collected data through different sources. I also employed member-checking by following up with participants after the data collection process to ensure my interpretations were plausible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Emails were sent to participants to clarify certain answers, and they were given opportunities to expound. I wrote detailed descriptions that allowed the reader to conceptualize the study to the extent that the information is transferable to other situations possessing shared characteristics (Creswell, 2007).

FINDINGS

Schlossberg's Transition Theory helped shape my analysis of how FGTS transition to the university and the role institutional support services have on their transition and success. Defined through Schlossberg's 4-S System, the transition process provides a way to identify resources students possess to cope with transitions (Anderson et al., 2012). The study explored what, if any, support services utilized by FGTS enhanced their persistence towards graduation. Common themes developed from the data analysis were attendance of transfer orientation, types of services utilized, reliance on family/community support, and accessing transfer advising/advisor. In this section, I center on the voices of the participants to examine each of the themes.

Attending Transfer Orientation

FGTS assess their situation by their ability to manage the transition into the university. Implementing policies and programs within four-year institutions that allow for transfer students' successful transition is essential (Bahr et al., 2013). Bahr and his associates (2013) posit that a student's perception of their connectedness to the institution plays a role in their academic integration. Orientation programs often used as a measure of academic integration are one way universities seek to address students' perceptions. All student participants attended either an online or on-campus orientation program. These same students reported receiving accurate information regarding transitioning to the University, yet the programs lacked the connectedness most were expecting. For example, Billy explained:

> I did. I attended orientation, but I really don't remember what we did. We just like walked around campus basically, uh, just picked our classes. Yeah, that's pretty much it. I sorta like… was hoping they like, I don't know, we'd be able to go to the dining halls, get something to eat. I don't know if like to go to east campus check out like the facility over there. It was just like touring north campus, just walking around and then, yeah, picking your classes, getting your Ucard and walking out.

Destiny echoed the same sentiments:

> I came super late. So, if you thought yours was watered down, I was like 0.0% concentration. Like it was real low… we didn't do like a real tour. We went into um, [an academic building] Right. There was like maybe like 20 of us and we just seen pictures, a slideshow of the campus. So we just watched the Slide show, the virtual tour. We just watched the virtual like slide show and that was it.

Montana shares her similar experience but added that connecting with other transfer students prior to her on-campus orientation provided for a better experience stating:

> So when I transferred, they [university] opened up a Facebook transfer group … I was like banking on to make friends but they opened it up like a day or two the weekend before, like you were supposed to move in…We all like flooded into this Facebook group and we all like did the whole Snapchat thing, made like another group chat for people who really wanted to make friends. And we became like a solid group of transfers together… and then, um, we all kind of like made a plan to hang out the night before the orientation and we did, and we all got together and met each other, and we were this like solid unit of transfer friends. and we went to the orientation together… the orientation itself, it was pretty basic orientation. I found it to be not too, not super exciting.

As stated by the study participants, successful transitions into 4-year institutions are essential to transfer students' involvement and engagement. Based on the conversations, the university seems to be missing this important opportunity. The virtual tours offered by the university are a basic service that, unfortunately, may not satisfy the student's need to experience connectedness. In Montana's situation, her connection occurred in the university's transfer Facebook group and not during orientation. Unfortunately, the transfer orientation program designed to promote academic integration seems to leave students with a negative perception of their transition experience. According to Bin's experience, the online transfer registration process seemed to be rudimentary: "I did the online…I don't remember. Certainly, because two years ago, yes… they help me like how to sign up for class…so yeah, it was helpful."

University employees participating in the study echoed the same sentiment about the support offered during transfer orientation sessions. One staff member shared their perception:

> I think the one thing that we could do differently is perhaps change the way we orient them. Um, but that's a real struggle. And I don't, you know, I don't want to say that the folks in orientation are doing a good job. I think it's a real struggle because some, a lot of transfer students, they don't want more orientation. I just want to get my classes, my ID and be done. Um, and I, so I, you know, I think that there's a challenge to kind of differentiate the students that might benefit from a more in-depth orientation versus those that are like, I just want to come in and go.

Higher education institutions that recognize the need to address the specific needs of transfer students include practices like required transfer orientations. The institution's current approach to orientation often does a disservice to transfer students. The lack of academic advising and campus tours can delay the student's transition and academic integration. Taking a more specific approach to understanding the multiple yet common characteristics of transfer students may allow institutions to make a huge impact on a student's ability to persist (Miller, 2013). Orientation programs are the university's way of letting transfer students realize their worth. If the university's mission remains centered on having transfer students feel valued, then providing dedicated resources like tailored orientation programs could help FGTS feel welcomed as well as improve student outcomes.

Utilizing Institutional Support Services

Although existing research emphasizes the importance of recognizing students' lived experiences, it was surprising to hear FGTS describe the treatment they received that hindered them from utilizing the service(s). For example, when asked about the Career and Co-op Center, Diana explained her reluctance to venture over:

> Its support is there for students too, if they would like to take advantage of those supports. … like for the careers. I, I think when I came at the beginning, I always see people who don't look like me going to the office and I feel like it was not the best for me… So I didn't feel, I saw like lot of minorities going through that door. They were always like white males with suits and stuff. I feel like, Oh, I don't know. That'd be weird. It felt like somehow intimidating even to see like an, like I recognize how they had to be like well dressing, stuff like that. But I feel like the office wasn't for me. Um, so I didn't seek out… for their support just because of that. And I shouldn't…

Although Diana was aware of the resource, she felt the service was not inclusive and felt unwelcoming. She never visited the office but felt as a female student of color she did not belong there, and that the department would not cater to her unique needs. When asked about his knowledge, experience, and use of the career center, Bin's experience proved different:

> Um, I knew it's because, um, I knew my friend was there, so they, they refer me to that, that um, in the staff here they are very helpful. So, uh, they have me so like, um, uh, they help me like revamp everything. Um, before I go to the interview before I, uh, I got a job, so it's very nice, you know, like, um, so I got like, uh, um, so I got an a company call me the first time and told me and I mean they remind me, um, practice interview and I went through that interview and got, that position like two days.

As a male student of color, Bin had a positive experience, as did Billy:

> Yeah. I'm in the same program too, but I'm not like, I'm not in a co-op yet, but all my experience has been pretty good with either go in there and get your resume checked out or like a mock interview or something for, I actually had a couple interviews in there too. It is a good resource to have at the university.

Both males of color, Billy and Bin did not feel intimidated like Diana. From their comments, one can infer they felt welcomed and supported. When asked about her perception of the experiences of FGTS who utilized the same career services, the interview participant stated:

> So, they may not start the career piece early. And when they do, depending on wherever they transferred from, I think it's sometimes it's a lot of work to get them to even think about what major you want to get into. Have you spoken with people, done informational interviews to speak with people and we are wired such that you'd say, how about your family? Then it goes back to, I don't have, I'm the first person to come to college. And when you start talking about networking with them to them, all they're thinking about is, I don't know, an immediate family member that has been in this profession before. So, you have to break it down to them and say, forget that. How about even your cohort people in your faculty? Different people come into career events, then they get the aha moment. So personally, when I notice or realize the student is a transfer student, I put that extra amount in it.

This staff member makes the extra effort to assist the FGTS, yet it only seems to happen if the student comes into the Career and Coop Center. Students like Diana, who felt unwelcome or who did not hear about positive

peer experiences, have never visited the center. Her perception that that service was not for her prevented her from receiving assistance with resumes and interviews. One way the university could better support FGTS is to bring career service supports to the transfer student. Opportunities to increase knowledge about these important resources could include staff members visiting classes, particularly those that have a high percentage of transfer students. Career services could also offer peer student career counselors that are more representative of the student body to offer basic support for FGTS and serve as liaisons.

Questions about another student-centered resource, tutoring, revealed contrasting responses and thus warranted further analysis. Tutoring supports are heavily promoted during orientation, in recruiting materials, and on the university's website. All study participants were aware of the tutoring services, and the following is Destiny's experience with the Tutoring Center:

> I'm actually at the tutoring center quite often and they're great. They are, I think, I think orgo [organic chemistry] tutoring needs a lot of work just because there's like 500 of us taking orgo 1 and another 500 taking orgo 2 with, like one or two tutors in there. So I think for one, I think that that tutoring space needs to be extended into a larger space…

Destiny's utilization of the service was positive. Although there were many students who sought out tutoring services to pass this course, it did not deter her from using it. Montana felt the same about the tutoring services and utilized them for a different course, sharing:

> Love the tutor center. I'm horrible. And they are getting me through my stats class with like a solid 85. Yeah. Like I took stats once before. I got like a 68 at my community college. I was dreading taking it again. I do love my professor. She's awesome as well. But I go to tutoring and I see the same tutor every week at the same time. And he just very like, he doesn't just give me the answers. He'll be like, okay, what's the answer? And I'll give it to him, and he'll say, okay, why though? And he will not let me get past it until I figure out why. Yeah. I really appreciate the tutor center.

Other students' experiences with tutoring were less than positive. Maria shared:

> I never liked the tutoring centers here… to this day, avoid them. I always felt discriminated against using those services. I found that especially if it was like white students, I would find that it was kinda like, they were just rude… it wasn't even like, I just didn't feel like they were editing myself or they were trying to help me. I think it was just like, you know, like it just left me feeling like dumb a lot of the times. And even when it was just like people that like work there full time, like look the actual advisors and stuff like that, if I were there, like I just never felt empowered. And so it got to the point where whenever I would go to these services, like I would just stop saying that English is not my first language. And the treatment was very different.

Claudia agreed with Maria and stated she had a similar experience saying: "I go to the tutoring centers, [but] they don't want me there." When asked about tutoring, both Bin and Billy indicated they knew of the service but did not have a need to utilize them.

Maria and Claudia's experience with tutoring may not have necessarily had to do with them being FGTS but more so because of their race/ethnicity and because English is their second language. The tutoring centers, mostly staffed with students, can intentionally or unintentionally create an unfriendly environment. Implementing a training program that includes modules on cultural competency and unconscious bias should be required. This training model could create an inclusive and welcoming environment for all students, including FGTS.

One little-known campus resource was the Study Abroad Office. Although listed in the Transfer Guide, many study participants did not know this resource existed. Studies uncovered that participating in or utilizing programs and resources could benefit all students, no matter their background. Resources such as study abroad, career services, or faculty research projects are more likely to be underutilized or unfamiliar among FGTS, although participation in such activities can help FGTS advance toward successful college outcomes (Demetriou,

et al., 2017). This study's findings mirrored existing research about the reasons why FGTS underutilizes support services. Like career services, the study aboard office should look for additional marketing and informational strategies that are geared to FGTS.

Family/Community Support

FGTS may receive less support from their parents or families to attend college. Living at home, busy work schedules, and family responsibilities can often have a negative impact on their persistence and graduation. Given their unique challenges, it is likely that students may seek out and receive support from individuals outside their family, including faculty, university staff, or peers (Irlbeck et al., 2014). Familial and community support was present in much of the FG literature, sparking my interest in learning about the role it played in the participants' lived experiences. Montana, who lived with her 94-year-old grandmother before moving to campus, shared that although they are from different generations, they work everything out together. Destiny also lives on campus and feels support from some family members but not others:

> So, my parents, they support me but like no one in my family has a college degree. So my mom, a lot of times she's unsupportive because all she sees is me just leaving my family. And I have like a very like nuclear family. It's just me and my mom, my dad and my brother. So she just like, a lot of times she, there's like some level of resentment because I'm leaving.

Marie, who also lives on campus, shared similar experiences:

> My mom is super supportive. But my mom is also a lot of pressure… I know that she's struggling with the fact that like I'm 24 and I'm not married yet. I don't have kids. Like I don't have my own house, you know what I mean?

Even though her mother is supportive, Maria feels the pressure to start a family rather than continue her education. Claudia, who is a commuter and lives with her mother, receives support from people outside of her family:

> Um, so when it comes to support, so I had a lot, like, I depended a lot on like my friend's support in the beginning of my community college career because I, we did, we all didn't know what we were doing together. So we were like, let's help each other and not fail together. Um, and so, um, personally you, I couldn't depend on family because it's just me and my mom. I'm gonna like I'm her only child and she's sick. And the reason why it was so hard is because, um, her being sick out of that pressure of like if something happens to her, like I'm 18 and homeless and so what am I doing with college? Like that's why I kept kinda like playing with the idea of like dropping out of school. Cause like, what do I do with college? And then I would go the office and tell my boss I'm thinking of dropping out. She's like, no you're not. She's like, no you ain't. Um, and like she would get me resources that I would need.

Claudia's home life pressures caused her to consider dropping out of college but persisted due to the support she received from the community college faculty and staff. Bin could not solely rely on his family and looked to others for support: "They couldn't help me, so expect my friends to help me." Like Montana, Billy felt that he could just do it on his own:

> I feel like I just did it myself because it's easy to navigate. You can just Google anything and yeah, I mean I didn't really seek help cause I didn't really need it, if I did then someone would pointed me in the right direction.

Family and community support for FGTS college students can play a critical role in their academic success (Demetriou et al., 2017; Lester et al., 2013; Longwell-Grice et al., 2016). The importance of these types of supports cannot be overestimated because FGTS with family obligations rely on such supports to enhance their academic success; it is the support students bring to college with them. The cultural capital FGTS possesses that often helps them to succeed, especially when the necessary institutional supports are not available, accessible, or known. Though Billy and Montana are FGTS, they possess the cultural capital necessary to navigate the university system and have successfully sought out and utilized campus support services.

Accessing Academic Advising/Advisor

The participants' coping strategies informed their decisions and choices as they managed the transition. FGTS each had prior experience with advising and academic advisors. These experiences assisted them in controlling the direction of the transition as they sought advice on selecting courses. Literature is rich with studies on the impact positive advising interactions can have on student retention, particularly for FGTS (Lockhart, 2019; Longwell-Grice et al., 2016). Academic advisors have the unique opportunity to initiate and develop a strong relationship with FGTS before they step foot on campus. Unfortunately, not all study participants had opportunities to create such a relationship. Billy transferred from another four-year university and shared his experience with his advisors from each institution:

> I think my advisor is my professor also, so I don't really like that cause I feel like a professor like teaches and does a lecture and they don't have to like help kids, like make their schedule. I don't really like [to] burden them with coming in for like a million questions. But like at [my other institution], they had like your advisor was like, that's their job was to be an advisor. So I think that was better over there as opposed to here having a professor be your advisor and also they don't really know well in my experience they don't really know as much as what an actual advisor would know cause I had like a question about like taking a freshman seminar and then they were like, Oh, I don't know.

Montana's experience with an advisor she met when arriving on campus was positive:

> I went last semester for this schedule that I'm currently in and she was great. She totally like if I didn't really want to take something like my math courses, she asked me if I want to take one. I said, I'm not really comfortable like there yet. And she was like, that's fine, but like, let's like figure out something else you can do instead like to get you there; she was super personable.

Unfortunately, Destiny's experience was lacking as well:

> My advisor that I had from the beginning as transfer for bio, she like seriously ruined a big chunk of my life because she was like, your grades are terrible. You're never going to be a doctor, find another career.

Like Billy, Claudia discussed her experiences with a professor as her advisor:

> So basically they're teachers, they're professors or advisors, but I don't feel like they're trained. Like I don't feel like they know what to tell me. Like if I ask them a question they don't know. So like if you asking us all at once I'll tell you something and they don't know. Then like where do you go? And then like you try to contact other people and then they don't answer. So it's like literally where do I go if no one answers.

Receiving frequent and in-depth advising remains crucial, particularly to FGTS. Students and even institutions may not consider advising as a support; nonetheless, it is imperative. Advising provides an opportunity to select courses, and it is also a way to foster engagement, build relationships, monitor student progression, and provide guidance. These opportunities are frequently missed when advising becomes nothing more than a meeting to check off required boxes. Offering academic advising early and often can minimize obstacles FGTS may face when persisting toward graduation. Students who benefit from specialized, tailored advising can stay on track and graduate in a timely fashion (Lockhart, 2019; Wetzel & Debure, 2018).

DISCUSSION

The study's findings revealed that FGTS were aware of various support services offered by the university, yet utilization of such supports varied for several reasons. For example, only two of the study participants utilized the campus tutoring services and had positive experiences. Although two others knew of the tutoring services, they did not need to utilize them. Other participants expressed how they felt unwelcome or discriminated against and, therefore, never sought out tutoring. Similar findings emerged regarding discussions centered on the Career and Coop Center. While most students at least utilized the services or planned to do so in the future, one

student felt the service was not for her. As a female student of color, she perceived that career service supports were designed for white males and consequently never sought the center's services.

Other services, such as the Study Abroad Office, remained inaccessible to the study participants; most expressed having very little, if any, knowledge about its' existence on campus. Research has revealed study abroad programs can benefit FGTS (Demetriou, et al., 2017). Although information about the Study Abroad Office and its 300+ programs appear in the Transfer Guide, none of the study participants knew of the office's existence.

One very interesting finding was the varied success of academic advising. While some students had initial positive experiences with their advisors, others did not. Those who had success during the first semester experienced less favorable results in subsequent semesters. FGTS seem to be yearning for solid student-advisor interactions. Several participants expected and desired to build such a relationship with their advisor above meeting once a semester to select courses. Students stated in the focus group they had worked with life coaches at their previous colleges and expected to find something similar at the university. This unintended finding seems to be a crucial support service that can enhance FGTS success.

Limitations

This study contains some limitations that should be noted. First, all study participants came from the same university, making generalizations limited to this study. Second, students of color were overrepresented in the sample, which is not an accurate model of the minority rate at the university. Lastly, only staff members participated in the study due to scheduling conflicts with faculty and decision-making administrators.

Practical Strategies to better support FGTS

Community colleges and four-year universities provide services such as advising or orientation. These support services, however, should be specialized to better promote success for FGTS. Based on findings from this study and review of first-generation and transfer student literature, I outline practical strategies that can better support the unique needs of the FGTS.

Strategy 1: Enhancing Transfer Advising. Creating partnerships between community colleges that allow four-year universities' transfer advisors to conduct academic advising on the community college campus as soon as the student starts at the community college can ensure that students receive adequate information. Such advising enhances the transfer process and timely degree completion. Like four-year university advisors at community colleges, there should be opportunities as well for community college advisors at the four-year university. Community college advisors could receive training across both institutions on admission requirements, degree requirements, transfer credits, and articulation agreements. Such training allows for a deeper understanding that better guides students through the transfer process. Informal transfer advising can be encouraged within the classroom. Faculty can do so by emphasizing course content the student will need to know in order to succeed at the four-year university.

Dedicated transfer advisors at the four-year institution allow transfer students to receive advising that is specific to their unique needs. Since no two transfer students are alike, having transfer-specific academic advising guides transfer students in decision-making around enrollment and course selection. Doing so helps point students in the right direction toward degree completion instead of going down unintended pathways, which can delay graduation. In addition, training transfer advisors helps them gain professional development in honing their skills as life coaches to meet the needs of the FGTS.

Strategy 2: Enhancing Transfer Orientation. Pre-Orientation provides opportunities for students to visit the four-year university before or during the transfer process. Transfer students are invited to open houses conducted by the university. In addition, transfer students can tour the campus, visit academic departments, and sit in on faculty or student presentations. Allowing FGTS opportunities to get a 'sneak peek' at what the university has to offer can further inspire and enhance the transfer process.

Once admitted into the university, students are given the option to attend full-day transfer orientations that include campus tours, student club fair, and university resources fair. This is particularly important for students who did not have the option to attend a pre-orientation or open house. In addition, incorporate concurrent sessions into the orientation programs that allow students the opportunity to attend many workshops on various topics, such as major or career exploration.

Strategy 3: Tapping into an Underutilized Resource - Familial/ Community Supports. Informational programs should be designed to introduce families to what their student's college experience will entail. This allows for a better understanding for families when students must stay after classes end to attend tutoring or work on group projects. Invite families and communities to special events that recognize and honor student accomplishments, such as award ceremonies, induction ceremonies, poster presentations at symposiums, or speaking/ performance events. Not only does it allow for involvement and engagement of the family, but it also strengthens the support students receive from their families. Implement family liaison programs that allow First-generation transfer students' families to be involved in the development of programs designed for this unique population. Not only are the families in the program providing support to incoming FGTS students but also to their families.

CONCLUSION

This study attempted to identify existing institutional support services for FGTS and how they access those supports. Examining the types of services FGTS access helped to better ascertain the effectiveness of these services. Just because universities design and implement student-centered resources does not guarantee they will serve FGTS. To assist this student population, higher education leaders must use their agency to implement effective, accessible support services to address FGTS' unique needs.

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JCAPS

ALL-GENDER RESTROOMS: EMBRACING CHANGE IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Amanda Vigneau, Shepley Bulfinch Architects
Chris Hillebrand, Shepley Bulfinch Architects
Joel Pettigrew, Shepley Bulfinch Architects

As architects and designers, we face design challenges that are rooted in the built condition. In our collaboration with student activities professionals, the effective use of space to service, engage, and welcome the campus community is at the forefront of design and planning discussions. We must consider the social implications of our physical designs that evolve as social and cultural norms change. One such topic of extended conversation is the all-gender restroom which has been a topic of conversation in the projects we are designing over the last decade. This piece will help bridge the gap between student affairs practitioners and architectural designers with information and understanding of how code influences the design of all gender restrooms, so that campus communities are better prepared to advocate for their needs in building all gender restrooms.

INTRODUCTION

As institutions are increasingly moving towards all-gender restrooms, it is vital to understand the why. Public restrooms have a vast history, including when and how restrooms became separated by the sexes, race, and current social, cultural, and political debates around LGBTQ rights. All-gender restrooms are no longer a discussion or experimental idea within the institution but a response to establishing social and cultural norms for future generations. According to a 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey Report, "59% of participants [16,351 respondents] have avoided bathrooms in the last year because they feared confrontations in public restrooms at work, school, or other places" (James et al., 2016).

Public restroom facilities are a necessary part of the buildings we create, providing privacy for a universal part of the human experience. The de-gendering of restrooms has been at the forefront of architectural discourse around accessibility and inclusion for all because they are used by all. The traditional men's and women's rooms provide a choice, a threshold to cross, a decision to make in a basic human function that very publicly puts on display your choice of entry and, therefore, how you identify. That understanding of a person's vulnerability and privacy in this choice has been taken up by architects and designers as we have been trained and practice in empathy and accessibility to all.

As practice and conversations around all-gender restrooms become the norm, architects have implemented design plans and pushed the understanding of building codes that make it easier for institutions to follow suit, designing spaces that are inclusive of all student identities. This article will discuss how student life professionals and campus leadership can advocate and plan for all-gender restrooms with an understanding of the design and code implications they come with. By aligning these fields with common language and understanding of code, we expect this article to offer student life professionals tools to come to the drawing board with when considering new spaces or renovations in their campus buildings. We will discuss the general building code considerations and local jurisdiction approvals needed to install all-gender restrooms, knowing that every state and city

has different requirements. And finally, we will review several case studies of projects that we have designed to illustrate the options available that may fit best with a particular space or campus strategy.

Gender identity and inclusion on campus

Students, staff, faculty, and other campus community members may spend the entirety of their day on campus. Gendered restrooms present a choice for some that could lead to fear of harassment or even physical assault. According to a recent study, over half of transgender graduate student respondents shared concerns that "if their gender identity were revealed to other students and professors, that they would no longer be emotionally or physically safe on campus," noting other surveys where 25% of transgender, nonbinary, and gender non-conforming (TNG) students were "denied access to restrooms or other facilities in school (Monheim, Ratcliff, 2021)." Additionally, in a further study asking TNG students to create a wish list with gender-inclusive policies and practices they wished to be implemented at their institution, the addition of accessible and visible all-gender restrooms was the most requested change (Goldberg et al., 2018).

In recent years, the legislative battle around gender identity has taken many forms and has led to a state of inconsistency in design and policy. Recent legislative action muddying policy waters includes a 2016 act in North Carolina called the "Public Facilities Privacy and Security Act," which required individuals to use restrooms or changing facilities in state buildings that corresponded to their sex at birth (Colburn, 2020). More recently, in 2021, the United States Supreme Court held a lower court's decision in favor of Virginia transgender student Gavin Grimm, who had sued the Gloucester County School Board for not letting him use the bathroom that corresponded with his gender identity before graduating in 2017 (Reuters, 2021).

An all-gender restroom is a restroom designed inclusively for all. Through thoughtful design, we have responded to our clients asking for neutrality in a space that everyone uses to understand the tremendous impact on a person feeling welcomed and included by their institutions. Incorporating this type of facility into a design is hard to envision without an existing standard, and while some projects have the luxury of building from scratch, the existing conditions faced in renovation projects can mean limited design opportunities. As building codes and state and federal regulations evolve around the topic of all-gender restrooms, it is important to remain informed and flexible. While there is not a one-size-fits-all solution, we have outlined recommendations around how to approach the conversion of existing facilities and the design of new all-gender restrooms.

Considerations

When designing all-gender restrooms, we need to consider the institutional values and why they are being installed. Is the institution mandating a policy for all construction projects on campus, and what is that policy? Is this specific project requiring all-gender restrooms based on stakeholder and user feedback? Is it a notional idea to study for feasibility reasons or to get leadership buy-in on an approach? Is it a full-building approach, or is it adding some all-gender single-user restrooms adjacent to gendered restrooms? Student life professionals are tasked with ensuring the health and well-being of their student and campus community, and the values and priorities of your department should be matched with these design considerations.

The approach will vary according to the type of project in which all gender restrooms will be installed. A building renovation is very different than new construction and requires careful planning to maximize the impact these restrooms can make. A student center is different than a classroom building, which is different than an office administration building – the scale of all-gender restrooms will shift based on the adjacent programs and anticipated traffic. Finally, we need to consider the local building jurisdiction and the building codes being applied to the project. Once these elements are understood, usually through a series of workshops to understand the possibilities, we can begin to incorporate a working design solution into our project. Some of these solutions include but are not limited to the following concepts.
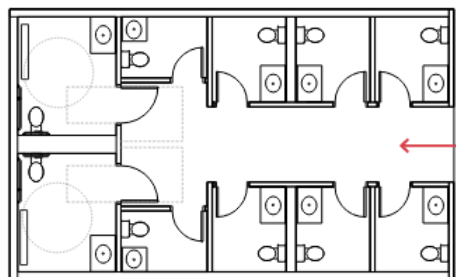
Multi-stall Gendered Restrooms with Adjacent All Gender Single User Restrooms

• A more conservative approach and solution to avoid code variance processes
• Potentially a more cost-effective approach to renovation projects
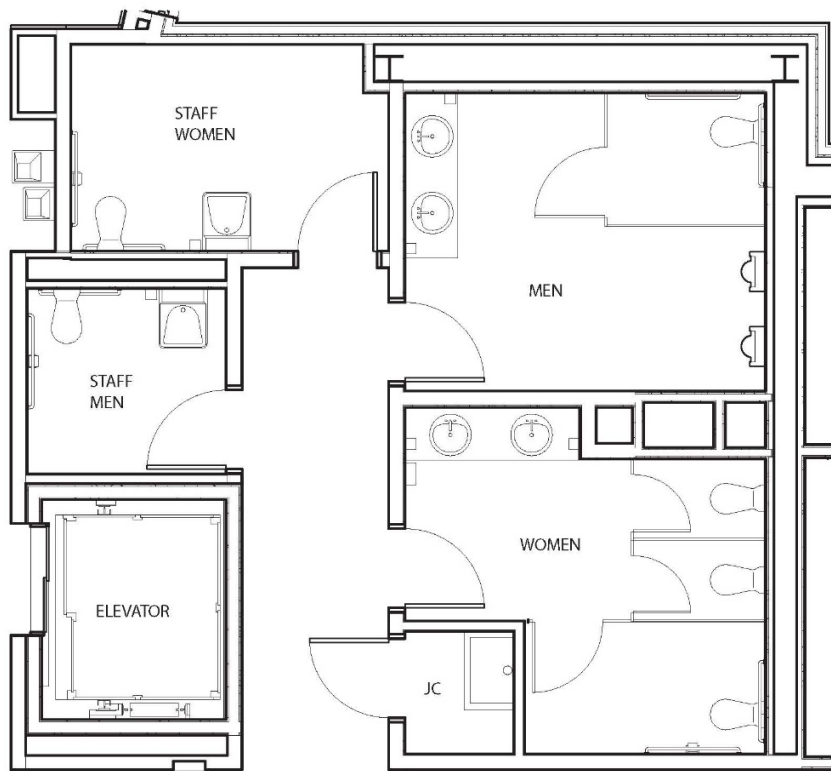

A Series of All Gender Single User Restrooms

• No multi-stall gendered restrooms, but all single-user restrooms, each with their own sink
• Potentially cost-prohibitive and uses a lot of floor space

INDIVIDUAL UNISEX RESTROOMS WITH SINKS

Multi-stall All Gender Restroom with Adjacent All Gender Single User Restrooms

- Allows users to choose between using the multi-stall all-gender restroom or the single-user all-gender restroom(s).
- Potentially the most flexible option giving different levels of privacy choice
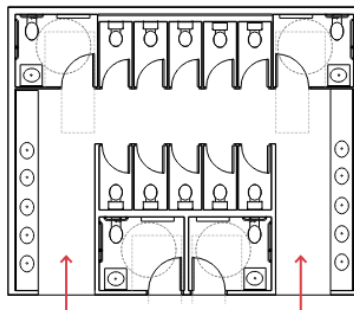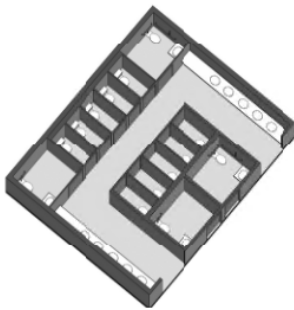
FULL HEIGHT STALLS, ADA ROOMS, SHARED SINKS

Multi-stall All Gender Restrooms Only

- A more definitive approach that gives all users the same experience
- A multitude of layout options would allow for features from the approaches above to be incorporated
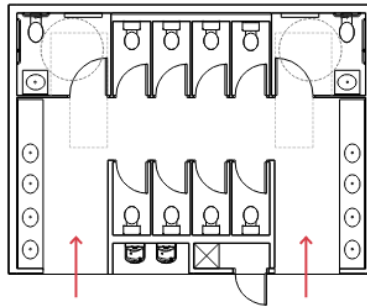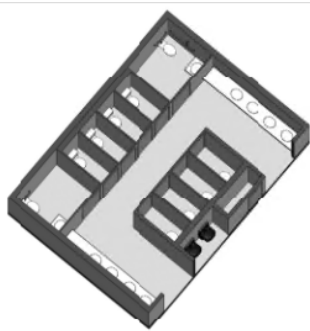
FULL HEIGHT STALLS, ADA ROOMS, SHARED SINKS

When evaluating your potential layout options for a specific project, the following items need to be kept in mind.

Privacy. Both visual and acoustic privacy should be considered when designing restrooms. Selecting a lock that visually communicates occupancy status prevents potentially uncomfortable interactions. Consider stalls that extend floor-to-ceiling with minimal gaps between panel parts or full-built partitions to ensure better acoustic privacy if the budget allows.

Safety. It is important to create a space that feels safe for all parties, including those who may not yet be comfortable with the idea of an all-gender restroom. Airport restroom entries, for example, are specifically designed to ensure that if a disturbance happens, those outside can hear.

Comfort. While the factors that produce a sense of comfort are unique to everyone, we can make design decisions that aim to improve comfort levels on a broad level. Installing mirrors in individual stalls can increase user comfort by allowing a space to groom in private.

Engagement. Inclusion is about universal acceptance and understanding, so one of the best strategies for implementing inclusive design is to bring many voices to the table. We recommend involving stakeholders and users through a variety of engagement strategies, including staff who will be responsible for the maintenance and cleaning of these spaces in the future.

Words matter. The language used regarding all-gender restrooms is as important as the architectural changes themselves. Words and identity graphics typically shown with gendered restrooms can create an environment that excludes, so we recommend using neutral signage.

Based on the potential layout options and factors described above, we can begin creating specific layout options for a project which may include:

- Laying out toilet stalls and studying full-height partitions between them as either actual walls or solid panels.
- Determining how many accessible stalls are needed and where to best locate them.
- Studying the different widths of stalls to allow for all body types to feel comfortable.
- Studying where sinks and mirrors should be located to avoid unwanted sight lines and maximize flow for high-traffic spaces such as outside a union ballroom or dining hall.
- Studying entrance and exit options to maximize safety and comfort for all users. Knowing institutional restroom accessory standards can allow us to begin to lay out those features so that they not only fit but are located correctly to allow the restroom to function properly (e.g., "Where is the soap dispenser in relation to the sink, and the hand drying station once your hands are wet?").

Implementation

There are many facets to the building code that determine how a building is allowed to be constructed. The materials used to build a building impact its size and life safety requirements (e.g., sprinklers and emergency exits). How the building is used in conjunction with how it is built will also impact life safety requirements and determine a building's occupancy. For instance, a convocation center would be calculated to hold far more occupants than an office building. The occupant load is used to calculate the quantity and size of emergency egress routes out of the building as well as the number of toilet fixtures needed. Current building codes calculate fixture counts differently between men and women - until 1990, codes did not even include considerations for accessibility. In general, both restrooms will have the same number of sinks, but men's rooms require fewer toilets. When determining the number of fixtures within an all-gendered restroom, the initial approach is to use the building's occupancy load to calculate the number of toilet and sink fixtures per floor and total the women's and men's rooms to size a single all-gendered restroom.

There is a lot of variation in the building code used across the country, which is being interpreted differently by local and state officials. This is important for student life professionals to understand as they explore opportunities with their colleagues in campus facilities. The buildings' location and local building code will help guide design decisions and best practices. The International Building Code (IBC) is widely followed within the United States, with modifications being made at the state and local levels. The IBC is revised every three years, and most building jurisdictions take time to review and determine what changes they want to adopt and which they want to remove or modify. Student affairs professionals need to understand that this variation and adoption of codes may make the path to design decisions differ based on where you are located. Using a local architect, or one with a code consultant familiar with the local area, can enhance your approach to designing all-gender restrooms and avoid wasting time on a design that may not be accepted by local inspectors. While the IBC determines general building codes, it is used in conjunction with the International Plumbing Code (IPC), which is used to determine specific plumbing code requirements. The 2021 IPC has included parameters for all-gender restrooms that local officials may now reference to help them interpret how they may be installed.

In designing an all-gender restroom, here are some important changes to the 2021 IPC to be aware of:

- The allowance for all-gender multi-stall restroom.
  - ‣ Previously there were no provisions for multi-stalled facilities.
- Removal of binary language, signage, and designation for single-user restrooms.
  - ‣ Previously all restrooms required a gender designation, even for single-user stalls.
- Required occupancy indicator on doors of single-user restrooms.
  - ‣ Previously single-user restroom doors could obviously be locked but did not require an indicator to let others know it was occupied.
  - ‣ This does not apply to stalls within a multi-stall facility but is considered best practice and recommended.

- A provision that was NOT approved in the 2021 IPC was the requirement for full-height partitions between stalls.
  ‣ Some local jurisdictions, however, have included specific dimensions for toilet partitions in all-gender restrooms
- If urinals are installed, they must be in a stall and cannot be used to replace toilet fixtures

Once the local building code parameters are confirmed, and the design team understands the local jurisdiction's stance on all-gender restrooms, we can begin to design the layout and details with the project stakeholders. Items to consider for a multi-stall, all-gender restrooms typically include:

- Restroom entrances: is there a door, multiple doors, or an open "airport" entrance? Is there an entrance at all, or simply stalls offset from the corridor?
- Sink and mirror locations: is the grooming area within the multi-stall area or separated? Do the mirrors provide unwanted sightlines from people at the sinks or outside the restroom?
- Full-height partitions: It is typical that all stall partitions go floor to ceiling for comfort, privacy, and security? This requires that all stalls be treated as individual rooms, which require their own ventilation, lighting, and fire alarm, adding cost to the project.
- Stall partition material: are the walls normal stud walls or panels? The stud walls take up more room but provide more privacy and a place to install accessories more easily. Panels take up less space but provide less privacy.
- Stall doors: do stall doors go from floor to ceiling or is there a gap at the bottom or top? This tends to be a security topic. Are there occupancy indicators as part of the door hardware?
- Urinals: do you want urinal stalls in addition to the toilet fixtures required? In the interest of privacy and comfort, you may need to install urinals within their own stall with specialty signage to indicate the fixture type.
- Future flexibility: this may become a moot point, but we have been asked to design a layout that provides the flexibility to convert an all-gender multi-stall restroom back to a gendered multi-stall facility for various reasons, but as all gender restroom considerations are put into the code; and become more common, there should be less concern for this flexibility.

CASE STUDIES

Through a variety of higher education projects, we have worked with our institutional partners to provide all-gender design solutions that support their values and student programming.

2015 – Addition to a Community College Building in the Boston, Massachusetts area. Five years ago, this community college recognized that it needed to accommodate restrooms for non-binary students, but at the time, the state of Massachusetts required that all restrooms be designated by gender. As a state project already delayed from the previous recession, time and budget were of the essence, and working through a code variance process was going to take too much time. It was determined the best way to reach the college's goals would be to proceed with gendered multi-stall restrooms that would meet the required fixture count, but immediately adjacent, there would be two single-user restrooms. These individual restrooms were still required to be binary despite being in addition to the required number of fixtures. To avoid any building inspector push back, signage was installed labeling the two extra rooms men's and women's, but once the occupancy was granted, that signage was replaced with non-binary signage that remains today. Seven years later, the code is changing, as we indicated earlier, offering us milestones upon which to build and learn.
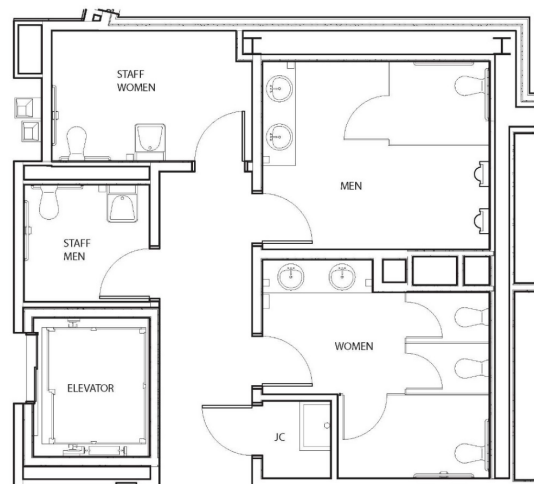
2019 – Full Renovation of a Student Union at a public university in Western Massachusetts. During early stakeholder meetings with the university, including their student government leaders, it was determined that all-gender restrooms were desired for the renovated building, which was being stripped down to its structure and exterior walls. While the current student body was asking for this layout, the campus leaders knew the building was still going to be used for alumni and other conferencing events with older attendees who may not feel comfortable using all-gender, multi-stalled restrooms. Since the building was primarily used for assembly, it required a large number of toilet fixtures, so a multi-stall facility was unavoidable. To accommodate both scenarios, the university requested that the layout of the multi-stall all-gender facility be laid out in a way that could be reverted to a binary multi-stall facility should they need to for whatever reason. Additionally, adjacent non-binary single-user restrooms were installed across the hall to accommodate anyone not comfortable with an all-gender multi-stall facility. The state of Massachusetts still had not revised their building code, so we pursued a variance that was easier to achieve at this time. Focusing on a flexible layout to revert to a binary layout did not allow for an optimal layout, with two entrance doors and long and narrow halls with toilet stall doors on one side. This made the space "tighter" as the institution also opted for full-height panels to add privacy, as discussed earlier.
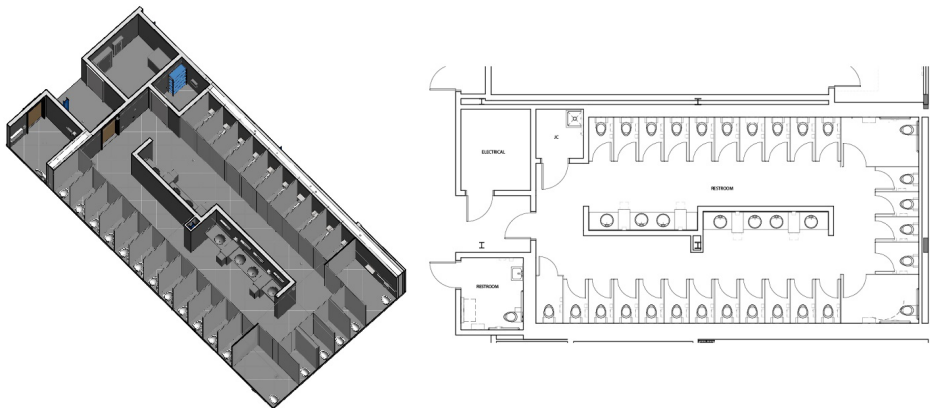
2020 – Renovation and addition to an academic and innovation building at a private university in Maryland. The renovation and addition to an existing academic building positioned it to become a new gateway to the edge of campus, pushing cross disciplinary work and collaboration at the institution. The university introduced all-gender restrooms to the project early in the design process following success at another on-campus renovation. Pending amendments to the city of Baltimore building code allowed the university to move forward with open entry restrooms, lined by individual hard wall construction toilet compartments, with full wood doors, occupancy latches, and a central sink core. Throughout design, the openness to the adjacent core space, as well as individual privacy, were balanced with the use of single-user rooms in lieu of toilet partitions.
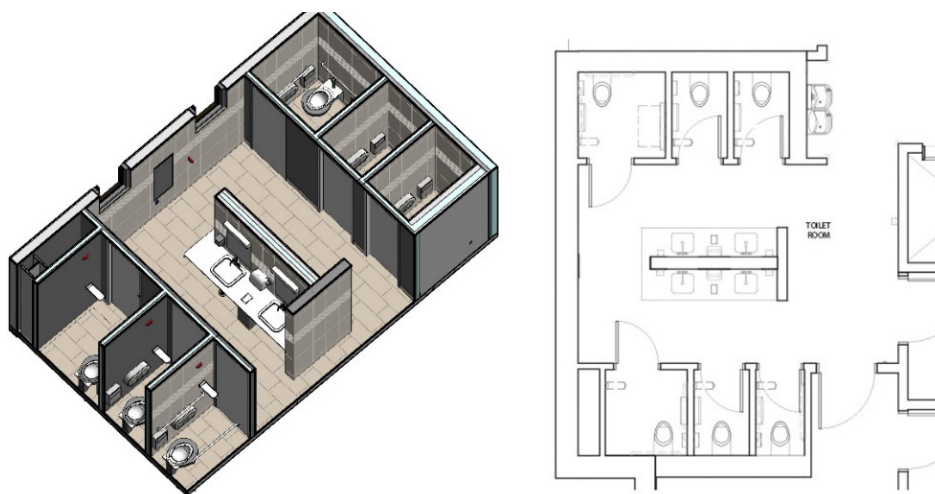
2021 - New Student Center Building at a private university in Baltimore, Maryland. The inclusion of all-gender multi-stall restrooms was a foregone conclusion on this project, with the priority centered on finding the best possible layout for the institution's values. We presented a multitude of layout options with multiple variations on each one until the right option was collaboratively identified. This resulted in a non-door open airport entrance which led to a sink area before continuing into the multi-stall toilet area with a wide circulation space between stalls on either side. Stalls are separated with stud partitions, vary in width, and include accessible single-user stalls with a sink and baby changing station. Outside the open entrance of each multi-stall facility is a non-binary single-stall restroom for those who may feel uncomfortable with the multi-stall layout.
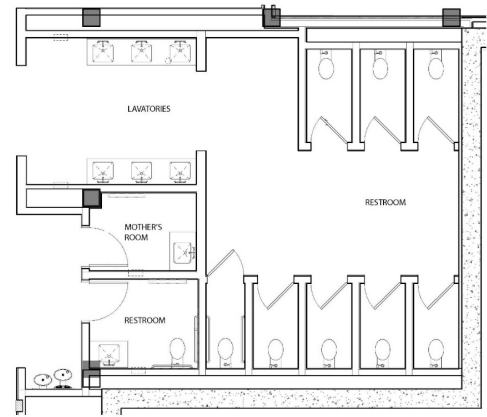
CONCLUSION

As institutions continue to modernize their facilities to ensure their campus communities are supported, empowered, and welcomed, meeting the basic needs of their users in an inclusive way is vital to that growth. All-gender restrooms can take several different forms, fitting the values and infrastructure of their specific institution. Each option comes with specific constraints and technical considerations – whether building codes have caught up to the needs of a community or not. While we are not asking student life professionals to become experts in code, being prepared to ask these questions and know what obstacles may be in play will help in advocating for these spaces as plans come together.

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JCAPS

FOSTERING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND BELONGING ONLINE: A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN RIO SALADO COLLEGE AND AMERICAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

Janet M. Athanasiou, American Public University System
Michelle Reese, Rio Salado College
Floyd H. Hardin, III, Rio Salado College

This scholarship-to-practice paper examines the importance of engagement among college students and highlights a partnership between two online institutions - a two-year community college and a university - dedicated to fostering diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. Guiding this work is the premise that higher education should be accessible to all who wish to pursue it, and that two institutions of higher education on opposite sides of the country can work together to share the stories and experiences of their students. The authors applied literature relating to belonging, engaging in campus activities, and the importance of sharing one's story to a partnership involving two different institutions and webinar discussions featuring underrepresented students.

INTRODUCTION

A 2021 *Inside Higher Ed* survey showed 71% of students report a lack of connection with peers and faculty as a result of online learning (Ezarik, 2022). A survey by the College Innovation Network indicated similar results: 69% of students felt less connected to peers; students also noted that college activities are an "important aspect" of their learning experience (College Innovation Network, 2022, p. 6). The coronavirus pandemic forced much of higher education and student activities to pivot and provide classes, activities, and services online, which continues today. With that, conversations at institutions emerged around maintaining an online presence in light of the shift in education. This change rose on the heels of the social justice revolution after the 2016 federal election spurred student activism and advocacy from already increased levels of civic engagement (Jacoby, 2017; Savas & Stewart, 2019). Born from a desire to provide more student activities and support for underrepresented students, leaders at Rio Salado College, a primarily online community college in Tempe, Arizona, and American Public University System (APUS), a fully online university with offices in Charles Town, West Virginia, partnered to spotlight the student experience in online education around themes related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging (DEIB).

One outcome of the shared commitment to student activities and DEIB were quarterly panels with a keynote speaker, as well as student leader and alumni panelists from Rio Salado and APUS discussing the impact being an online student has on inclusion and belonging. Participants in these panels were campus leaders involved in student activities, honor societies, and other leadership opportunities. These activities helped build that sense of belonging craved by online students who felt isolated from their peers. They also put into practice research surrounding the themes of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

OVERVIEW OF THE PARTNERSHIP

School representatives from Rio Salado and APUS discovered a like-minded focus on DEIB activities and efforts that promote engagement. The cross-institutional team augmented existing co-curricular activities with creation of the webinars to provide space for students, staff, and the community to come together to learn, share, and grow, providing an opportunity and platform for underrepresented students to share their stories. In addition to giving participants space to talk about their experiences, the institutions fostered a commitment to providing underserved populations of students the opportunity to pursue higher education goals.

Project management and a regular cadence of meetings were key tools for a successful program launch. The meetings included representatives of the Rio Salado President's Office and Institutional Advancement team, members of the APUS Office of Student and Alumni Affairs, APUS Provost Office, and APUS University Events team.

Planning Process

The schools worked together to provide the quarterly webinars with hopes of raising awareness, to promote diversity of thought, to educate, and to inspire our collective communities to do better and take action on DEIB issues. College and university leadership with connections recruited subject matter experts as keynote speakers. Each institution then sought individuals for the student and/or alumni panel. Pre-event meetings built familiarity among participants, allowing for a more open conversation during the webinars. Introducing student and alumni panelists to one another, as well as the keynote speakers and leadership, provided a more collegial environment. It also allowed for a final technology review to assure quality of sound and visual assets. The moderator worked with committee members to develop questions for the event, noting that incoming questions from the audience would be interspersed throughout the Q&A period. Finally, providing gate-keeping steps, including the monitoring of registrations and assigning off-screen team members to watch the chat, helped maintain a smoother production. Leaders at the institutions set a timeline prior to the events, typically three to six weeks in advance, to inform and invite their student, alumni, employee, and leadership populations through email, newsletters, blogs, and social media.

OVERVIEW OF WEBINARS

The first events provided an opportunity to explore the online platform and hone in on the best use of time. Initial events were capped at 60 minutes, but that proved to pass too quickly. Later events were extended to 90 minutes to allow time for student panel participation and the question-and-answer session. The team solidified the meeting structure as the partnership progressed, establishing a cadence of:
- Moderator: Introduction of topic
- School leadership: Welcome
- Moderator: Introduction of keynote speaker(s), including biographies
- Keynote: 20-30 minute address
- Moderator: Introduction of student panel, including biographies
- Moderator: Pre-established questions for keynote speaker and student panel
- Moderator and behind-the-scenes team members: Pull questions from chat to weave into the pre-existing cadence
- Moderator: Closing remarks

Panel discussions were scheduled in alignment with cultural awareness months such as International Women's History Month, Hispanic Heritage Month, and Pride Month. Table 1 outlines the topics, keynote speakers, and other important details of the webinars.

Table 1. *Dates, Titles, Keynote Speaker, Student Panel, and Links to the Rio Salado/APUS Panel Discussions*

Date	Title	Keynote	Student Panel	Recording
January 2021	Rio Salado College and American Public University System Partnership Announced	Rio Salado President, Dr. Kate Smith, and American Public University System Provost Dr. Vernon Smith	N/A	N/A
March 2021	Aligning our Institutions with Ideals of Belonging	Provost/Senior VP Virginia Union University, Dr. Terrell Strayhorn	Shayla Pollard, Rio Salado student; Cordero Holmes, Rio Salado student; Hannah Via, APUS student; Willis Jackson, APUS student	http://www.kaltura.com/tiny/kfstm
June 2021	Ideals of Belonging: Creating Sustainable Support	APUS Department Chair, Ret. Lt. Col. Dr. Larry Parker	Carolyn Shack, Rio Salado student; Jennifer Gushwa, APUS student; Jacob Bailes, APUS student	http://www.kaltura.com/tiny/zttfv
October 2021	Ideals of Belonging: Continuing the Legacy of Civil and Personal Rights	Civil Rights Activist, Alejandro Chavez	Ashanti Ruiz, Rio Salado alumnae; Nina Rivera–Nunez, APUS student, Hilda Sanchez–Herrera, APUS student	http://www.kaltura.com/tiny/mi7v3
March 2022	Leadership Perspectives	Rio Salado College President, Dr. Kate Smith; Acting APUS President, Dr. Kate Zatz	N/A	N/A
June 2022	Be PROUD of Your Voice: An Interactive Discussion on Advocacy and Inclusion Strategies	New York State Supreme Court Justice, Honorable Franc Perry	Emma Harlow, Rio Salado student; Giselle Velazquez; Rio Salado alumnae; Alyssa Holmes, APUS alumnae; Danielle Fergus, APUS alumnae	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sx3AQ-V5CRU
November 2022	Fostering Belonging through Storytelling	Kyle Mitchell, Diné (Navajo) Storyteller	Bridget Kimsey, APUS student	https://youtu.be/2zt27XeSjlM

PARTICIPATION IN ONLINE STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Research shows online communities can provide a safe space for students to engage with peers and faculty. For example, LGBTQ+ students use social media and online networks to better understand, explore, and embrace their LGBTQ+ identities, particularly if they are not ready to come out to friends and family (Fox & Ralston, 2016). Within a college setting, engagement in online activities, such as the APUS and Rio Salado webinars, provides a space for students to feel like they are a part of their community, even if they are not physically present (O'Shea, Stone & Delahunty, 2015). Knowing that online communities help provide a safe space where members can feel connected to shared values provided a starting point for the teams when considering student participants for our panels. Students who engaged with their institutions, either through student activities or opportunities to connect with faculty and staff, and were willing to talk about their experiences made for excellent panelists for the discussions.

SENSE OF BELONGING

There is much work campuses can do to enable their students to create a sense of belonging, from co-curricular activities allowing for out-of-class interaction with faculty, to campus activities, clubs, and organizations centered on shared interests and achievements. Sense of belonging refers to the feeling of connectedness, or that one feels they are important to others (Rosenberg & McCullough, 1981) on a college campus, either in person or virtually. When institutions provide opportunities for students to engage in purposefully designed activities to promote learning, their students possess a stronger sense of belonging (Komives, 2019). Our student panelists

reiterated this many times: "The more we talk about transgender issues, LGBT issues, racial issues, I believe, schools have the ability to create a more accepting environment for every student," said Rio Salado graduate Giselle Velazquez (2022).

While engagement in campus activities will not look the same for each institution, providing space for students to connect and interact can have a positive impact on their overall experience. For schools that are primarily or solely online, this means creating virtual space to build a community. Students familiar with online learning technology and social media often look to virtual communities and web-based platforms to create connections and build friendships (Williams & Whiting, 2016). "Availability to access these programs can help, even if it's not taken advantage of," American Military University alumnus Alyssa Holmes (2022) told the audience during one of the webinars. While co-curricular offerings are not often the reason students elect to attend one institution over another, when providing online education, they can make a difference to students who are looking to reduce the isolation that comes with online learning (Athanasiou, 2020).

Underrepresented Students and Engaging in Discussion

Sense of belonging is particularly meaningful for students who perceive themselves as marginal to the mainstream life of campus (Hurtado & Carter, 1997), meaning institutions must ensure they are working with all populations of students, not just those who already feel as though they belong on campus. Strayhorn (2019) asserts that "encouraging positive peer interactions, connecting students with supportive faculty, and providing opportunities for student involvement" (p. 22) help with establishing a sense of belonging. Furthermore, participation in campus activities provided by the institutions allows for a greater sense of belonging than if students seek out engagement opportunities on their own (Ellison & Braxton, 2022), so inviting active campus leaders to be panelists allowed the students to share their involvement history and realize their importance to the institutions.

Research shows that peers are influential in students experiencing a sense of belonging, which is amplified when students can socialize with peers from different backgrounds (Strayhorn, 2019). The webinars created that space for interaction. The colleges built off a foundation of a sense of belonging, knowing that conversations regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion needed to start with ensuring students felt like they belonged on their respective campuses and that they were free to share their experiences, positive and negative. Higher education can benefit from intergroup dialogue that assists students in making sense of race, ethnicity, cultural background, religion, and gender (Maher & Thompson Tetrault, 2007). Brown (2020) recommends a co-curricular intergroup dialogue program situated in student affairs to promote understanding amongst undergraduate students. Engaging in discussions allow online students to build relationships with classmates and peers (Hatcher, 2012), while also building those intergroup dialogues that can help to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts on campus and increase the sense of belonging for non-dominant campus populations (Raphael, 2021). Participation in co-curricular programming, such as online student organizations, promotes a sense of community, builds relationships, and allows students to connect with others who share an interest or identity (Athanasiou, 2020).

Sharing Stories to Build Inclusion

Knowing where those around you come from and how you are connected in order to create a sense of belonging requires empathy. Storytelling as a uniting force finds its place among several scholarly articles (Soule & Wilson, 2002; Dunn & Cherup, 2021). Storytelling is empowering and "one of the most universal human experiences" (Gordon & Rezvani, 2021, summary). The sharing of narratives "builds trust, cultivates norms, transfers tacit knowledge, facilitates unlearning, and generates emotional connections" (Soule & Wilson, 2002, abstract). The webinar series created by Rio Salado and American Public University System was designed around this central idea. When we hear the perspectives of those around us, we see a glimpse into other cultures and identities and build inclusivity. "We can make actual progress on inclusion by implementing a story-based approach where employees are encouraged to tell their stories, own them, and consider how they impact their day-to-day experiences at work," inclusion consultants Gordon and Rezvani explain (2021, para. 4). The fundamental idea of storytelling and belonging is not unique to corporate America. Alejandro Chavez, grandson of civil rights activist Cesar Chavez, shared the power of storytelling during one of the webinars:

One of the great things about this community and everybody here is you're getting… tools to share your stories, our stories. I encourage us to remember we have to constantly be sharing our stories, sharing our narratives. That's how we move people (2021).

Throughout the webinar series, keynote speakers and panelists shared their stories - from the first-generation Latina student navigating higher education to the transgender student who discovered a college community of like individuals to the student who found their place in an online community, confirming their decision to seek a degree. Each shared their individual backgrounds and experiences, providing perspectives into different cultures, pathways, and peer groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Allowing members within a community to holistically contribute to important dialogue, meaningful engagement, and intentional collaboration transforms neutral spaces into brave spaces and brave spaces into safe spaces. Building a brave space requires designing space within the community where students, staff, and alumni have permission to bring the entirety of their experiences to the forefront without negative judgment. Fashioning the unification of these dissimilar worldviews to create a shared vision, yielding sustainability is the creation of safe spaces. Relevant topic-intensive webinars, culturally focused online conversation communities, lifestyle-adequate website blogs, and digitizing personal testimonials for mass consideration are strategies campus activities professionals can operationalize to foster college environments that cultivate inclusion and bolster belonging.

Utilizing webinar sessions is one mechanism educational leadership can implement to raise purposeful student connection to, and within, the organization. One of the first steps in launching community dialogue around diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging is to gain support from leadership. "Educational leaders, as a result of their roles, often function as cultural gatekeepers" (Aidman & Long, 2017, p. 109). In their research with future educational leaders, Aidman and Long (2017) noted a connection between the use of storytelling as a strategy to build "capacity and transmitting culture" (p. 121). Leaders who embrace storytelling as a way to develop belonging and inclusion could model this through community webinars with subject matter experts and students who share their experiences and history.

Our last recommendation is to develop a partnership to bring together like-minded communities to reach a common goal. Rio Salado and APUS are both online schools with similar student populations. Universities and colleges are microcosms of society, "uniquely poised to collaborate with local people and organisations [sic] to address societal challenges" (Wilson, 2021, para. 2). With online education becoming more ubiquitous, the collaborative effort to address social challenges can be expanded to institutions with similar goals located across the country.

CONCLUSION

Building a community of inclusion means providing a safe space for students, staff, and alumni to dialogue and engage with one another. Embracing this idea within the parameters of an online higher education institution requires intentional creativity, collaboration, and communication. Campus activities professionals can cultivate environments that holistically include and support all students through the creation of online spaces such as webinars, online conversation communities, or website blogs and personal testimonials. Rio Salado and APUS took steps to intentionally invite participants that represent systemically underserved communities who do not meet the mold of the typical college student. By doing so, it opened the doors to often unheard stories and histories, allowing a deeper understanding of the student populations we serve. We plan to continue these efforts, taking forward what we've learned to unfold areas that can be improved within our institutions to better engage students from all backgrounds.

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JCAPS

AGENCY: A KEY DRIVER OF STUDENTS WITH MINORITIZED IDENTITIES INTO STUDENT ACTIVITIES LEADERSHIP

Allen A. Womble, University of Illinois at Chicago

With marginality and power, forms of resistance, and student development literature serving as a framework, this article explores how student leaders' minoritized identities impact their student involvement journeys. Utilizing the methods of Constructivist Grounded Theory, this paper answers the following research question: "In what ways do student leaders with minoritized identities exercise power in their involvement choices and involvement experiences." Findings indicate that student leaders with minoritized identities exercised power in what they chose for involvement and that they chose opportunities that provided agency to execute their agendas.

INTRODUCTION

During my first year as a student activities graduate assistant, I had a hallway conversation with my supervisors that stayed with me. My supervisors noted that for years the leadership ranks of student organizations advised by our office had far more representation of minoritized identities than other areas in our large, Southern public university. We mused about whether our students with minoritized identities, which I, too, had been before graduate school, felt more comfortable in our organizations and with our staff than in other spaces on campus. And we wondered if these students with minoritized identities were intentionally choosing to spend their time and effort with our office versus others. In the subsequent ten years and two additional schools where I have served as a student activities advisor, I have found this trend of students with minoritized identities serving in greater mass in student activities persists. This study seeks to answer the questions of whether students with minoritized identities are intentionally choosing involvement in student activities, and if they are intentionally choosing student activities organizations, why?

LITERATURE REVIEW

For decades higher education scholars have studied the impact of involvement on students. Astin (1984) found that students learn more the more they are involved in both academic and co-curricular activities and that the more energy a student places into their involvement, the more they will get out of the involvement experience. In their assessment of the research on the effects of college on students, Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) found substantial evidence that suggests that involvement and engagement in extracurricular and social activities during college, including Fraternity and Sorority Life, has an overall positive impact on the self-assessments of students concerning their development of career-related skills. They also found that both involvement in diversity experiences and in service activities during college appear to enhance students' perceptions of how well college prepared them for their current jobs. In their updated volume, Mayhew, Rockenbach, Bowman, Seifert, Wolniak, Pascarella & Terenzini (2016) found evidence supporting the positive impact of engagement in student activities on campus, including the positive association with retention and graduation and the development of leadership skills.

Scholars have also chronicled the differing impact involvement in student organizations has on students with minoritized identities. Griffin, Nichols, and Perez (2008) found that minority students are not experiencing being involved in the same ways as their peers and argue that student affairs professionals must find ways to

make campus activities most inclusive of minority students. Fischer (2007) found that involvement in formal involvement activities on campus led to greater social and academic success, particularly for Black and Hispanic students, but both Black and Hispanic students were also most likely to have relationships off campus and were more likely to leave campus to go home potentially harming their integration into campus. Baker (2008) found that different organization types impacted minority students differently than white students – participation in political organizations improved academic performance for Black and Latinx students, while involvement in Greek Life caused a decrease in academic performance for all students except Latinx women. Stewart (2013) further found that students with minoritized identities were less likely to participate in leadership trainings (though Black students participated more than other minoritized races and Asian Americans were least likely to participate) and internships but were more likely to participate in volunteerism.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) acknowledges and affirms the legitimacy of the lived experiences of people on the margins (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Delgado (1989) emphasizes the need for naming one's reality. Counter-Storytelling provides a way to combat these common narratives rooted in whiteness by offering stories of people on the margins either to dispute existing narratives or to center the stories of people of color in general without responding or refuting other points (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

Though not originally included in Ladson-Billings's (1995) adaption of CRT into education, intersectionality has become one of the leading tenets of CRT in education research (Mitchell, Simmons & Greyerbiehl, 2014; Museus & Griffin, 2011; Torres, Jones & Renn, 2009). Crenshaw (1989) first coined the term intersectionality when discussing the increased marginality black women felt in the legal system. With this term and critique, Crenshaw joined other scholars in highlighting the compounding marginalization often faced by women of color and others with more than one marginalized identity (Collins, 1986; Frye, 1992; Zavella, 1991).

Scholars also note that though many view marginalization through a lens of oppression, it can also be a space of power. hooks (1990) argues that choosing a life on the margins as opposed to integration into white hegemony offers opportunities for power and resistance. hooks (1990) further adds that it is only on the margins that you have the power to say "no" to the colonizer and "no" to the "downpresser." Collins (1992) argues that the distinctive angle life on the margins provides Black women can be used as a strength. Anzaldua (1987) found a similar theme in her semi-autobiographical work detailing the mestiza and her fluidity and flexibility born through having to navigate many different worlds with many intersecting marginalized identities. But Anzaldua (1987) finds that the new mestiza offers unique opportunities to anticipate cultural expectations and resists them at will as a result of having to exist among different worlds.

Critique of Student Development Theory

With an understanding of the progression of CRT and its application to education, we must examine what surfaces from a critique of student development theory through a CRT lens. Patton, McEwen, Rendon & Howard-Hamilton (2007) explored how the tenets of CRT could apply to theory in Student Affairs and argue that theory has been fundamental in how student affairs practitioners approach their jobs and develop students. But except for racial identity development models and race as one social identity, student development theorists have largely ignored race and racism in their theory formations by either not discussing it formally or by not having study participants of color. Dill & Zambrana (2009) echo these thoughts and argue that to truly be intersectional, the lived experiences of marginalized people should be the starting point for theory creation. Nash (2008) further argues that people with marginalized identities have an epistemic advantage that scholars should employ when creating visions of a just society. Though scholars have sought to ascertain the impact of involvement on students with minoritized identities, the literature will always be found lacking until the voices and lived experiences of students with historically marginalized identities are centered in shaping what elements of involvement matter most.

Marginality, Power, and Resistance as an Expression of Power

Marginality is an opportune way to situate the study around student leaders from various non-privileged iden-

tities. Lee (2015) applies the tenets of marginality and power to higher education by arguing that in this setting, power is the ability of individuals to access and master institutional privilege, including formal forms of power such as administrative structure and informal forms of power such as understanding cultural norms and an overall sense of belonging. Lee (2015) also argues that power and marginality exist more as a spectrum than a binary. With this view of marginality and power as a spectrum, Solórzano & Villalpando (1998) provides a helpful view of how students with minoritized identities might exercise power in their marginality. Solórzano and Villalpando (1998) build on the concepts of power existing on the margins (Anzaldua, 1987; Collins, 1992; hooks, 1990) by using Giroux's (1983) notions of oppositional behaviors to evaluate the forms of resistance students with minoritized identities choose to employ. Solórzano & Villalpando (1998) argue that those forms of resistance or oppositional behavior can be overt, where students choose to exist outside of the expectations teachers and administration officials have of them, or covert, where students take quieter paths of resistance often within established power to push back on oppression.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to center the voices and experiences of student leaders with minoritized identities on the executive boards of departmentally advised student organizations to determine the impact of identity in student leaders' involvement journeys, including the ways student leaders with minoritized identities experience marginalization and power as a result of their identities. Though many scholars have called for utilizing the voices and experiences of students with minoritized identities to create theories of engagement instead of data about the students, few studies have emerged doing so. Also, no studies have sought to use the experiences of students with minoritized identities to expand the main narratives in involvement literature. This study will fill that void and shed light on the role of identity for students with minoritized identities in departmentally advised student organizations. The main research question this study answers is: "In what ways do student leaders with minoritized identities exercise power in their involvement experiences."

METHODOLOGY

Through Grounded Theory methodology, I inductively analyzed the involvement experiences of student leaders with minoritized identities. Constructivist Grounded Theory particularly allows for sensitizing concepts and calls for situating data and study participants in their relevant social and situational contexts, including power structures (Charmaz, 2014). This analysis led to the emergence of theoretical concepts on the role of identity and how these students exercise power within the marginality of their compounding minoritized identities while navigating involvement on campus. These emerging theoretical concepts are grounded in students' lived experiences and center their voices, bucking the trend of creating theory and practice based on quantitative analysis and observations of students' experiences.

To answer the study's research question – "In what ways do student leaders with historically marginalized identities exercise power in their involvement choices and involvement experiences?" – I searched for participants fitting the following criteria:

- 18 Years or older
- Have served at least one full term in a student leadership role on the executive board of a departmentally-advised student organization or in an equivalent student leadership role.
- Possesses either one or a combination of minoritized identities.

The above criteria created a sample of students whose lived experiences highlight the roles their intersecting identities played in navigating campus and their student leader journeys. Because students had to have completed one full term, study participants were either upperclassmen or recent graduates. In total, I interviewed 20 students. All students had at least one minoritized identity, though most had multiple minoritized identities. Most students in the study had also been involved in their student leadership experiences for more than one year, some serving multiple years on executive boards and serving in leadership roles in multiple student organizations, allowing for a rich comparison of activities at the university. I provide a chart of the breakdown of

study participants in Table 1. Each participant completed an intake form that provided general demographic information and signed consent waivers.

Table 1. *Demographics of Study Participants*

Gender		
	Female	11
	Non–Binary	2
	Male	7
Race		
	Asian	4
	Black	7
	Latinx	7
	Middle East & North Africa (MENA)	2
	White	1
Sexual Orientation		
	Gay, Bisexual, Other	11
	Heterosexual	9
First Generation		
	Yes	9
	No	11
Pell Grant Eligible		
	Yes	12
	No	8

Research Setting

All students in the study attend the same large, Research 1 institution in a major city in the Midwest, Big City University (BCU), which boasts an enrollment of about 30,000 students. BCU is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI). The institution holds no racial majority on campus though Latinx students hold the plurality at 34%. Also, 60% of students are Pell grant eligible, and 70% of students receive financial aid. Finally, 38% of students are first-generation students, and 36% of freshmen report having a first language that is not English. BCU provides the perfect setting to get a diverse group of student leaders with minoritized identities and examine their involvement through a critical lens.

Intensive Interviews

Each student sat for a semi-structured interview. The interviews lasted between 40 and 100 minutes long. I had a list of questions, but one aspect of intensive interviews is the ability to let participants take the conversation where they want to go as well (Charmaz, 2014). I also explicitly asked students questions about their identities and how those identities might have manifested in their experiences.

Observations

For data triangulation, I observed three virtual student-led events and secured a recorded portion of an executive board meeting of one departmentally advised student group featured in the study to gain a better insight into some of the critical elements of the student leaders' experiences. Maxwell (2013) states that observations are a way to see theory in use and allow you to gain information that you were not able to get in an interview because of participants' potential reluctance to share a certain set of their actions with the researcher. The observations allowed me to get a first glimpse of the work of student leaders and the way they support and challenge each other and advisors as they accomplish their aims.

Data Analysis

Open Coding. I utilized an open coding process using Atlas Ti to code for actions and interactions I saw in the observations and interviews. I chose open coding because of its inductive nature, allowing me to freely name what was occurring without any sort of influencing theory or data. I also coded each interview additionally for the roles of identities and marginalization in students' experiences. I ended my open coding phase with 887 individual codes. Open coding is used to find the core variable that explains the behavior of the participants. Once researchers discover the core variable, they can now engage in selective coding – coding for only the core variables and sub-core variables. (Charmaz, 2014) The core variable that arose in this study was care.

Focused Coding. Charmaz (2014) defines focused coding as using the most significant codes that emerged during the open coding phase to sift through and analyze large amounts of data. It may also involve coding your previous codes to fracture and splice data together. Glaser (1978) adds that focused coding advances the theoretical direction of your work and that the codes are often more conceptual in nature than the codes derived from open coding. I analyzed the 887 codes that emerged from the open coding phase and reworked those codes into larger, more conceptual codes and ideas that reflected the shared actions taking place across the student leaders' experiences and the common ways identity and its marginalizing and empowering impacts had through student leaders' experiences.

Theory building. After open and focused coding, researchers engage in theoretical sampling, seeking data from their study participants that match emergent themes from the initial data while the researcher attempts to define the theory (Charmaz, 2014). I coded interviews in groups of five before moving on to conducting additional interviews. This allowed me to engage in theoretical sampling. My core variable of care explicitly came in interview nine. I evaluated the previous interviews before to see how care emerged in those interviews. And as I proceeded with the other 11 interviews, I looked for and explicitly asked about various sub-core variables of care. I also tried to interview people with either less or different minoritized identities to see how the variables would appear in their interviews. Through the constant comparative method of comparing codes to each other, I ultimately condensed the initial 887 codes to 41 codes between six major code groups. Two of the major code groups represented the way identity impacted students' leadership journeys. As I compared the codes of identity through all interviews, I realized that identity acted in two main ways– it served as a barrier and/or bridge to one's community and as a focal point of students' agency and advocacy.

FINDINGS

Table 2. *Study Participants.*

Pseudonym	Primary Involvement	Gender	Race / Ethnicity	Orientation	Religious beliefs	First Generation	Pell Grant Eligible	Work Part Time
Alex	Activities Board, Activities Office Management	Female	Asian	Bisexual	Muslim	Yes	Yes	Yes
Amy	Orientation, Cultural Programming	Female	Black	Bisexual	n/a	No	Yes	Yes
Anna	Activities Board	Female	Latinx or Hispanic	Prefer not to say	Raised Catholic but not very religious today.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Anthony	Activities Office Management, Orientation	Male	Latinx or Hispanic	Heterosexual (straight)	Catholic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Arthur	Activities Board	Male	Asian	Bisexual	Spiritual	No	No	Yes
Blue Sky	Activities Board	Female	Latinx or Hispanic, International Student	Bisexual	Catholic	No	No	Yes

Pseudonym	Primary Involvement	Gender	Race / Ethnicity	Orientation	Religious beliefs	First Generation	Pell Grant Eligible	Work Part Time
Brendan	Activities Board	Male	Black	Homosexual (gay)	Spiritual	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gabrielle Orta	Greek Life	Female	Latinx or Hispanic	Bisexual	Agnostic	No	Yes	Yes
Harleen Quinzel	Greek Life, Cultural Programming	Female	Asian	Homosexual (gay)		No	Yes	No
Isha	Activities Board	Female	Asian	Heterosexual (straight)	Muslim	No	Yes	Yes
Jay Doe	Activities Office Management	Male	Latinx or Hispanic	Heterosexual (straight)	Catholic	No	No	No
Jesus	Greek Life, Cultural Programming	Male	Latinx or Hispanic	Heterosexual (straight)		Yes	No	Yes
Nicole	Student Government	Female	Black	Heterosexual (straight)	Southern Baptist–Christian (Evangelical)	No	No	No
Peach	Cultural Programming, Orientation	Female	Black or African American	Bisexual	Spiritual	No	No	Yes
Persephone Jones	Activities Office Management, Residence Life	Non–binary/ third gender	Middle Eastern & North African	Bisexual	Buddhist, Spiritual	Yes	No	Yes
Rachel	Greek Life	Female	Middle Eastern & North African	Heterosexual (straight)	Spiritual	No	Yes	Yes
Roman Pierce	Greek Life	Male	Black or African American	Heterosexual (straight)	No Affiliations or Beliefs	Yes	Yes	Yes
RS	Campus Ministry	Non–binary/ third gender	White	Other	Christ–follower, still exploring	No	No	No
Steffon Del Valle	Greek Life, Cultural Programming	Male	Black & Latinx	Heterosexual (straight)	Spiritual	Yes	Yes	Yes
Veronica	Activities Office Management, Orientation	Female	Black or African American	Heterosexual (straight)		Yes	Yes	Yes

Student Leaders with minoritized identities exercised power and agency in their involvement experiences and choices in two main ways – they used their salient identities to determine which experiences to become involved in, and they used their salient identities to build an agenda for the work they undertook in their roles. In this study, student leaders typically fell into one of two camps – students who foregrounded their identities when deciding how to engage with campus either out of necessity or advocacy, and students who preferred inclusive spaces affirming to everyone no matter their identities.

The more minoritized the group felt on campus, the more students with that identity led with their salient minoritized identity when seeking involvement experiences. For example, Black students comprise the smallest ethnic group at BCU. All but one Black student in the study explicitly sought out or created involvement tied to their Black identity. Also, most Black students in this study shared the importance of creating spaces for the Black community on campus. The student who did not specifically seek out Black spaces still participated in a summer bridge program for Black students that allowed him to connect with other Black students and staff on campus. In juxtaposition, Latinx students form the plurality of the student body on campus. Of the seven study participants who identified as Latinx, only two engaged in explicitly Latinx experiences, both choosing Greek experiences in Latinx-based organizations. But only one of those two students shared that their involvement was

an explicit choice used to connect with and advocate for their Latinx culture. The vast majority of the Latinx students in this study opted for multicultural experiences that centered inclusion of all instead of centering their Latinx identity. Many of the students shared that this was a result of coming from high schools where they were not used to foregrounding their race to fit into their white environments. Because the Latinx student population is the plurality of the student body, the Latinx serving offices on campus are both well-resourced and politically well-connected. These students shared that different Latinx student support offices on campus reached out and attempted to connect to them, but students rebuffed these overtures and instead chose more inclusive spaces.

In all cases, the departmentally advised student organizations that students chose served as a caring environment where they could show up as their whole selves. This choice was often an example of students' agency. They actively used identity to choose their experiences. Steffon exemplifies how his Black identity directed his involvement on campus.

> I made it a mission to not just be a number, so to be more involved. And the only way I could be involved in something is to be passionate about it. And that was all black. Everything I did was black. Everything I did was cultural, anything. That's what I was there for.

Peach echoes Steffon's sentiments saying she actively chose activities to be in community with other Black students.

> I didn't really go to school with a lot of Black folks 'til I went to high school. I think even though the Black population is very low at BCU, I think I was always putting myself in places to find those folks. I think also because it's so small, I think we are closer knit if that makes any sense. I think BCU is a microcosm of the city. I think folks definitely self-segregate, which I don't know is necessarily a bad thing. But I think people stick to their racial group or ethnic group or their … people who look like them when they create friend groups. So just deliberately putting myself in those places. So going to the African American cultural center. Going to events hosted by [Black Student Services]. Signing up to be a part of the [Black History Month Planning] committee. Joining these very particular organizations that have to do with Black students.

In each of the above examples, students showcase how their identities drove them to determine which activities to choose. But some students also chose involvement based on their explicit "multiculturalism." Anna shares that the fact that her identities weren't emphasized made it easier to connect with her organization.

> So I feel like [the Activities Board] was more of a place where it didn't really matter about my identity. I feel like maybe that's why I connected with them more because it wasn't, like, all based around that, you know.

A subtheme of some student leaders choosing spaces that centered multiculturalism compared to joining organizations specific to their salient identities was the harm they feared might come from their communities. Alex, a Vice President of the Campus Activities Board and a Muslim bisexual woman, avoided the Muslim Student Association (MSA) because she feared not fitting in with them, as she hadn't fit in with her high school's MSA. She shares:

> I'm not somebody that likes to be heavily involved in, like, the Muslim student association or whatnot because I don't like being grouped into that … there's a whole stigma and drama. And I didn't want to be part of that. I was fine being friends with the people that I was friends with as long as they didn't, like, push that on me and bring that drama with them. Also, I don't wear my hijab, the same way other girls do and I don't dress the way that I'm supposed to, so I felt like being part of that space would just lead to more judgment from them.

Asian students comprise the third largest student population at BGC, accounting for 20% of the student population. This student power and resulting student organizing led BCU to launch the first Arab American Cultural Center on a college campus in the United States. The BCU Muslim Student Association boasts of being the largest MSA in the country, with 5,000 Muslim students on campus comprising 15% of the student body. Thus, a large number of institutional resources are allocated to Muslim and Asian students on campus, and MSA forms a large nexus of community for students on campus. Though many of her friends joined the MSA, Alex was forced to find community through different avenues because of how she felt her differences would be received by her

peers and the pressures from her peers to conform to standard practices. Thus, choosing not to join the MSA could have meant being separated from important cultural support for Alex, especially since the university did not provide or support other mechanisms for Muslim students to connect (The Arab American Cultural Center had not opened when Alex arrived on campus).

Another vestige of identity that constantly appeared in the data was how it related to finances. Seventy percent of BCU undergraduate students receive some form of financial aid. Thus, finances are a huge factor for students. In this study, 80% of the participants worked part-time jobs to help offset their college costs and help support their families. Students often reported working anywhere between 30-60 hours a week, sometimes across multiple part-time jobs to earn enough money. Also, at least two participants who reported that they did not work to help support their family shared in their interviews that they participated in experiences that paid them or worked summers for spending money. Thus, 90% of study participants worked at some point during their college careers. Veronica reflects on the role finances played in her involvement.

> A lot of my quote-unquote leadership experiences were paid experiences. I am paid to be here. I'm a first-generation college student, so a need for adequate funding was definitely essential. I'm currently a senior with my very first apartment. I'm fully efficient, I'm able to pay big girl bills now, but a good portion of me growing up was realizing that there isn't anyone that's going to do for me. It has to be me.

For Alex, the fact that her on-campus experiences were paid both helped reduce her work burden and legitimized her staying on campus for her strict parents.

> Finances played a huge role. Throughout college, there were multiple times where I was working two to three jobs at a time. Just because I don't like relying on my parents' money, and they don't have a lot of money to begin with, so I didn't want to be asking them for things. So I paid for whatever expenditures I had. And I wanted to be able to support myself at least to whatever extent I could without asking them. So that led me to take on more roles where I was being paid. If it was a super high commitment and I was not being compensated in any way for it, I most likely would not have taken it on. So the fact that [the Activities Board] let me get paid and the fact that [the Activities Office] gave me a position where I was able to get paid was really great for me, and I think that the fact that I had a job on campus made it easier for me. Because then my parents were like, "You're actually working. You're actually making money for this, so you can do it."

Both of the above excerpts showcase a sentiment echoed by many of their peers – because of the financial burdens placed on these students, they had to be very intentional about what they chose to spend their time on. In addition to full-time class loads and extracurricular activities, they also worked well over part-time hours to support themselves and their families. Several students said they chose not to participate in certain activities, especially joining Greek Life, because of the heavy financial burdens they would incur.

In addition to the number of hours students worked preventing them from engaging in too many unpaid activities, students also talked in detail about the financial burdens attached to just being in community on campus. Nicole shares the financial woes of her freshman year when she had less money saved.

> I think finances were very different for me freshman year compared to where I've been at post freshman year. Freshman year, I was still depending on my parents for money, so, I didn't mingle as much. I don't know, for a freshman, it's like going out to dinner with friends, I guess I didn't have as many like, "Let's go get coffee or let's go get a burger." I just didn't have money to go do that type of stuff. So, I was very much so not able to congregate with people off campus with this being very much so an off-campus kind of university as much as I would've liked freshman year. I knew what I could and couldn't do or can't afford; so I would just shy away from conversations like that. After freshman year, because I started saving money, my parents allowed me, I should say, to save money from my internships, so I was able to help finance myself throughout the year. I felt like I went out more with people and that just helped me, ... I mean, Black folks eat a lot as a form of sharing time together. And I think about this really in relation a lot to student government, like everybody always went out to eat after the student government meetings and I didn't do that freshman year. But I got to do so after freshman year.

This example, and examples other study participants shared, showcase just how expensive being in community on campus can get. RS shared that one way their organization showed care was by actively making space and assisting people who may not have been able to afford the costs of engaging with the group, including carpooling for people who couldn't afford Uber rides to events or arranging to lodge people who would miss trains home because of the time events ended.

Building / Enacting Their Agenda

A unique aspect of student leaders' journeys occurs once they realize their agency and begin to use their positions and power to advocate for others both in resource allocation and outward programming, as well as advocate for others internally by creating the team environment they desire. Often it is through their advocacy and the utilization of the resources they have to accomplish specific goals that students engage in covert and sometimes overt forms of resistance fueled by the passion for creating the space they want both on and off campus. Brendan, an Activities Board President and Black, Gay man, shared an example of advocating for making the internal experience of the organization better.

> Honestly, the reason that I even joined the executive team for [the Activities Board] was because of my advisor. I told her that I didn't like how the organization was run, and I left it as a general board member and she asked me to come back as a committee chair and shape it to the way I thought it should be run, to fix it. To be the change I want to see instead of just sitting back and disliking whatever is going on.

Peach, Chair of the Black History Month Planning Committee and a Black, Queer woman, shares how students were able to use their platforms to ensure their salient intersecting identities received representation and visibility in programming on campus, thus using their agency to create space for others.

> So yeah, I am someone who is queer. I think definitely with Black History Month programming I at least try to be intentional about programming around the intersections within our community. The fact that queer people, queer black people exist for one. And also just the fact that queer Black people absolutely fought for your rights and you wouldn't have rights without Black queer folks. So I think I'm making that a part of the learning that I do in these spaces, but also a part of the teaching in some regard.

In the above excerpts, as a result of the work students were tasked with, they found their voices, realize their power, and utilize that power to advocate for the change they want to see both inside and outside of their organizations. This opportunity for advocacy leads to students recognizing and utilizing their voices and helps deepen both their experience and their connection with the campus and their peers.

DISCUSSION

When employing the Critical Race Theory lens of marginality and power, a major finding of this study that emerged is just how intentional and self-directed the process of connecting to involvement experiences is for students with minoritized identities. Students chose the experiences in which they engage. This demonstrates the agency students exercise in their involvement journeys. In these roles, students execute agendas they have to serve and help build their chosen communities on campus. They shared how they worked to further their values of inclusion of people with minoritized identities, advocated for their shared values and visions, and used whatever power and access they had in leadership roles to help other students who shared their identities and/or values. Also, they used their power in these roles to enact both overt and covert forms of resistance, including creating counterspaces on campus for community building to advocating for changes in campus programming that better aligns with their values. Even when institutional factors like the student body's racial and ethnic composition and the allocation of resources to support various minoritized student populations created less than satisfactory experiences for students, those students then worked to find and create their own pathways for community, support, and success. I contend that students should not be forced to seek out or build community on their own. But the fact that they were able to find and even build their own spaces and communities showcases the agency they execute in their experiences.

Also, Black students who felt the most marginalized on campus because of the low population of Black students

participated in the most overt, covert forms of resistance. They most bluntly stated that they chose to get involved in things on campus to further the Black community on campus and to make sure the Black community on campus was seen and spotlighted. Other racial minorities advocated for more of a multicultural, generally welcoming space, but they were very active in promoting that open and accepting space.

The findings outlined above support and expand on the findings of Kinzie et al., (2021) that agency, accomplishment, and giving back to their community lead to higher satisfaction in High Impact Practices (HIP) experiences for students with minoritized identities. In this study, the aspect of giving back to their community was embedded in the advocacy work students undertook once they realized their agency. A key expansion this study offers is that agency doesn't just lead to higher satisfaction. Agency seemed to be a key factor that drew students with minoritized identities into the experiences. Students sought opportunities to make changes they desired on campus and chose to engage in opportunities that provided this agency. Thus, to truly actualize this emerging key characteristic of agency, we must account for the agency of and in the student's choice, not just in their ability to exert agency within experiences.

Finally, 90% of participants primarily participated in paid student leadership experiences, and 80% of participants shared that they needed paid experiences to be able to support themselves. Some students shared that had the experiences not been paid, then they would not have been able to be involved on campus. Because the institution met students' financial hardships with care by providing paid involvement opportunities, the institution was able to mitigate some of the marginalization students felt because of their financial realities.

Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is that though I argue the setting of this study represents the future of higher education, it is not representative of the main type and composition of higher education institutions in the country. This setting does give novel findings, but the uniqueness of the setting could impact generalization. Also, this study evaluates a somewhat narrow avenue of involvement – students at the highest levels of leadership in departmentally-advised student organizations. Though this sample may seem narrow, this type of leadership position is available on every type of campus in the country, providing the ability for generalization. Finally, I had access to an email list of student leaders for this study, but I also relied on students' advisors to recommend study participants. This could lead to a large representation of students with positive experiences in their organizations in the study.

Implications

The findings in this study provide many implications for practice. One chief implication is agency. Student leaders with minoritized identities sought out experiences that both aligned with their identities and experiences that allowed them to give back to / build their chosen community on campus. The ability of the experiences in student activities to create their own organizational culture and direct resources to causes that resonated with them were selling points for their involvement. Student activities professionals should more explicitly market the agentic nature of these involvement experiences to recruit students. Recruitment campaigns should highlight the ability these experiences provide to students to shape the campus. Furthermore, practitioners should continue to find ways to increase the agency of student leaders within these experiences.

Another implication for practice is to provide more paid involvement opportunities. It is clear from this study's findings that one of the greatest ways an institution can reduce barriers to students with minoritized identities is to remove financial barriers that exist for students trying to engage in the university in a meaningful way. An interesting finding of this study is that even many of the students from higher socio-economic backgrounds still experienced financial hardship that forced them to work 30+ hours a week. And all but one student in this study participated in experiences that paid them in some way. Students shared that, at minimum, this funding enabled them to engage in the social and community aspects of the university that often come with unforeseen costs, such as transportation and food. Thus, if more experiences provided students with stipends, they could also help offset student costs. For years, activities offices have debated whether their involvement opportunities

should be paid, and many activities offices have moved to pay students. This study's findings respond with a resounding yes to the question of the value of paying student leaders and further found that paying students for involvement experiences could make the difference in whether students with minoritized identities can access the vast benefits of involvement.

A final implication of this study is the continued need to center policy creation and student development praxis on the lived experiences of those with historically-minoritized identities. Through the lived experiences of students with historically minoritized identities, this study surfaced the central role of agency, and the ability to harness and employ the institution's resources to build their chosen community led students to choose student activity offices for their leadership opportunities. We were also able to surface some of the barriers students face to engagement, such as finances, through the examination of the lived experiences of students with historically-minoritized identities. I join the clarion call of scholars who have argued for more student development and college impact studies that center the lived experiences of those on the margins.

Future Research

This study provides many threads for further research. First, these students' experiences surface an interesting question about how marginalized identities influence students' experiences on campuses where their identity is no longer on the margins of a particular space. Researchers could more deeply explore that question to fully understand the impact of identity on involvement. Also, identity and agency represented three code categories of a larger study. Researchers could launch a full study focused on the role of identity and agency in student involvement experiences. Finally, this study was a step in answering the call of researchers to center the experiences of the most marginalized among us in the creation of theory and practice. More studies are needed to fully realize the impact this change in focus will have on student activities, student development and practice, and higher education writ large.

CONCLUSION

Scholars have long documented the immense benefit of involvement on campus for students. But more recent literature has highlighted the disparities both of students with minoritized identities being involved on campus and the impacts of involvement on these students. This study sought to answer the call of scholars to center students most on the margins in the creation of theory and practice by exploring the role identity plays in the involvement experiences of students with minoritized identities. By employing a Constructivist Grounded Theory methodology with a framework of the Critical Race Theory concepts of marginality and power and forms of resistance to speak to student development within student involvement as sensitizing concepts, this study surfaced the emerging theoretical concepts of barriers and bridges of identity and agency to explain the role of identity in the involvement experiences of students with minoritized identities. Students with minoritized identities used their intersecting identities and the meaning they made of those intersecting identities to determine what to get involved in and find opportunities for involvement that allowed them to enact their agendas and create space for their chosen communities on campus. More research is needed on the role of agency and identity in students with minoritized identities on campus. Particularly, more research that accounts for the intersections of students' minoritized identities and the impacts of those intersecting identities on students' experiences on campus is needed to truly determine how to make student activities praxis most accessible and beneficial for all students.

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