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The Impact of Racism on the Personal and Professional Lives of Student Affairs Professionals: A Mixed Methods Study

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The Impact of Racism on the Personal and Professional Lives of Student Affairs Professionals: A Mixed Methods Study

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Abstract

The phenomenon of racism in our world is deeply tragic, with historical roots that pervade college campuses and the work of student affairs professionals no less than elsewhere in society. In fact, a premise of this research is that the American university as an institution was founded on White dominance and privilege. Today the effects of racism still trickle into the personal and professional lives of those working in student affairs. This study was aimed at understanding the problem through the eyes and experiences of student affairs professionals. The overarching research question was how do incidents of racism on campus impact student affairs professionals? A mixed methods approach was used comprising four phases: individual interviews, focus group interviews, a survey, and a final focus group to encapsulate and validate the issues of racism and its impact on student affairs professionals. Pivotal questions that motivated this research included how are we taking care of ourselves and one another when faced with racism on-campus? What type of individual work around identity development and understanding are we engaged in? How can we simultaneously impact the lives of our students in a positive direction while limiting the impact racism is having on our profession? What do we need to do as a community of student affairs professionals to better ourselves, better our profession, and make a positive impact on our campus community? The results confirmed the persistence and pervasiveness of racism on campus, impacting and necessitating the work of today's student affairs professionals. Detailed results and implications for practice and further research are discussed in reference to three levels: the individual student affairs professional; the group, or collectivity of the various student affairs roles across campus, and community, or university-wide. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA: Antioch University

Repository and Archive, http://aura.antioch.edu/, and OhioLINK ETD Center, https://etd.ohiolink.edu/.

Keywords: Campus Racism, Students Affairs Professionals, Mixed Methods

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Chapter I: Introduction

The university setting is a microcosm of our greater society and institutional racism permeates many college campuses. While there are many structural issues at play, the role of the student affairs professional often remains the same. This role is one of providing a support system for the students while they are on their academic journey. Support comes in the form of providing educational opportunities outside of the classroom; hosting social events to build community and relationships; and assisting with responses to crises, including helping students who may also be navigating difficult situations due to their social identities and, for the purpose of this research, their racial identities in particular. This research focuses on the lived experiences of student affairs professionals and how they are impacted by racism while working on-campus. A mixed methods study was used to understand the depth and breadth of how racism is impacting these professionals not only within the capacity of their role and profession, but from a humanistic perspective.

As a student affairs professional, I am often faced with situations in which a person's race is used against them or where they are experiencing microaggressions on a regular basis. For example, when incidents of racism happen in a residence hall, a community director or a student resident advisor is called upon to respond and support the impacted student and community. A director in a multicultural center may be asked to respond to an incident by pulling together a town hall meeting where students can gather to support one another, or that director may need to stand up in front of a group of constituents on campus to address the incident head-on. This is a tremendous responsibility and one that can impact a person's career as well. As I have seen all too often, the everyday nature of racism on campus can negatively impact not only the students who face the aggression, but also the student affairs professionals who are supporting them.

The field of student affairs holds diversity as a core value and the people who make up the professional landscape come from very diverse backgrounds. The two main national organizations for student affairs professionals (the American College Personnel Association and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators) each support multiple diversity and inclusion constituent knowledge groups. Within these "diversity and inclusion" groups, student affairs professionals bring their expertise to the conversation around advancement of needs, inclusive policy implementation, or, occasionally, in response to events happening around the globe that may be impacting higher education. Student affairs professionals regularly hold masters degrees and occasionally doctorates or other terminal degrees in their chosen field. Although, no level of education in itself can prepare a student affairs professional for the enormity of the task of dealing with racism on campus or supporting their students while trying to stay personally immune from its impact.

Colleges and universities are supposed to be hallowed grounds where intellectual pursuits are coupled with young people developing into their adult selves. Colleges are equally cherished for their research and innovation. Those of us who work with students on college campuses on a daily basis know it is a microcosm of society that reflects the same negative attributes on a different scale. When the United States elected its first Black president in 2008, many believed we had entered a post-racial society (Lum, 2009). But racism continues to rear its ugly head today. In the world of higher education and on our college campuses, racism persists and is not getting any less prevalent (Jaschik, 2016a). Research demonstrates that universities are not immune to the ugliness of racism that pervades people's lives on a daily basis.

We are reminded that although some argue progress has been made (Kaiser, Drury, Spalding, Cheryan, & O'Brien, 2009), our college campuses are still not doing enough to support

our students, faculty, and Staff of Color.[1] This limited progress is exemplified in the recent bout of blatantly racist acts on campuses that have received nation-wide media coverage. These include a hangman's noose being found on a statue honoring the university's first African American student (Svrluga, 2016), a racist chant by a historically White fraternity on their way to a "formal" event (New, 2016), or photographs of Ku Klux Klan members being touted as "art" on a predominantly White campus (Jaschik, 2016b).

Our colleges are not adequately equipped to challenge the hegemonic structure that perpetuates these despicable and deplorable acts. Although blame can be cast toward a plethora of reasons, racism is still a reality that many People of Color are exposed to when they set foot on the college campus. Faculty, staff, administrators, and students are all a part of the phenomenon of the culture of racism on campus, yet racism is not a topic that can be easily discussed in a campus environment as the discourse over first amendment rights persists (Lawrence, 1990).

Racism continues when those who have privilege do not want to abdicate any of it. Prejudice and racism can take many forms in different cultures. This research is focused on one particular form—racism in the United States on college and university campuses. Racism on a college campus can thrive when there are not enough coalitions built, not enough questions being asked, and not enough People of Color in positions of power to challenge and change the institutionalized nature of it (Stevenson, 2017).

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[1] To comply with APA formatting rules required for this dissertation, the terms "White" and "of Color" including any preceding nouns, are capitalized. I recognize that there is controversy over this delineation with many scholars calling for "White" to be lower-case and "of Color" to be capitalized as a way to center the marginalized voice. Personally, I am sympathetic to decentering "white" by leaving the term lower-case, but this strategy will have to wait for a post-dissertation publication.

Student affairs professionals have the potential to impact the proliferation of racism on campus by realizing our responsibility to the problem and by "doing something about it" in an effort to support our students. Many student affairs professionals work out of identity-based offices (i.e., Multicultural Centers, Women's Centers, LGBTQ+ Centers, etc.). Students see these centers as safe spaces. If these types of spaces, and professionals running them, did not exist, many of our students would struggle to find community in their own identity development journey. Additionally, if student affairs professionals did not want to interact with students on a daily basis and accompany them on their educational journey, then we (student affairs professionals) should not be in the field.

Higher Education and the Student Affairs Professionals

Professionals in student affairs typically have not entered the field as a calling or as a path they anticipated. A running theme when speaking with other student affairs professional is how they themselves entered the field: oftentimes it was because a student affairs professional was influential in their life as an undergraduate student. That individual then shared with the person "you can do this for a living" and explained how to "get into" the field of student affairs through graduate assistantships and academic programs. While this prescribed path is not the universal path for everyone in the field, it is a common explanation given when speaking with other student affairs professionals.

Student affairs professionals, depending on the structural hierarchy of their institution, work in most areas "outside of the classroom." This could include financial aid, orientation, residence life, student services, advising, or other direct interactive offices that support students along their academic journey. Most college campuses also have employed student affairs professionals in identity-based offices. These typically include ethnic programs, women's

centers, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender centers, and other culturally based offices. Because of the prevalence of these offices and the individuals who run them, students who identify with the work of the centers oftentimes find themselves spending considerable time working directly with the student affairs professional, or benefiting from the programming and services that the center provides. A collateral assignment often affixed to these centers is around crisis management. Take, for example, the 2016 election of Donald Trump as president. Many of the identity-based offices on-campus became safe-havens for students who were feeling alienated due to the political climate created by his election and inauguration. One student that I am familiar with, who identifies as Senegalese, described a situation in which he was attempting to walk into the student union days after the election. This particular student stated that a group of three White men blocked the door from him and stated "go back to your fucking country, you're in Trump's world now." This student, who is an American citizen and emigrated to the United States with his family a decade earlier, sought refuge and support in the office of the director of Ethnic Programs and Services. While it is not explicitly stated in that person's job description, for that one student, that day, she became a counselor and advocate for the student who had had this terrifying experience on-campus.

Support for students is paramount to the job expectations of the student affairs professional. Oftentimes, however, support of the college students' experience can be a difficult road to navigate given the space that the student affairs professional occupies. Student affairs professionals are often not faculty members, nor are the vast majority of them seen as upper level administrators. As mid-level managers, as well as entry-level professionals, there tends to be an underlying fear permeating the workspace when difficult situations with students present

themselves. Student affairs professionals lack tenure and are likely to feel fear of retaliation or job action if they are perceived to be in "opposition" to the university by supporting the students.

One remarkable student affairs professional with over 30 years of service at his institution recently told me of a story in which he actively participated in a student protest on-campus. After one of a plethora of police shootings made its way into the public sphere, students on his campus took immediate action and planned a march through the main corridors of campus to protest and promote equality and justice for the fallen victims. This particular student affairs professional was approached by students because they saw him as an influential African American staff person and one who had been at the institution long enough to develop political clout. The staff person participated in the protest; however, he marched along with the students with a hooded sweatshirt pulled down over his face. When questioned about this, the staff person told me "it doesn't matter how long I've been here, I don't know who will see me and if they'll think I've stepped outside of my lane. I still have a family to feed at home and a roof over my head to pay for." This staff person's experience speaks to an overwhelming sense of disparity within the profession.

Racism Within the Field: Student Affairs Graduate Programs

As Patton, McEwen, Rendon, and Howard-Hamilton (2007) stated, "race, racism, and racial realities have been generally ignored [in the field of student affairs]" (p. 40). This sentiment continues as little attention has been devoted to incorporating race into theories most widely used in the profession or in graduate programs. Student development theories in the field have, by and large, developed from theory on psychology and human development dating back to the 1960s. Many of the big research names that are still studied in student affairs graduate programs are White men (e.g., Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Kohlberg, 1958; Perry, 1999), or

White women (e.g., Josselson, 1973; King & Kitchener, 1994; Magolda, 1992) who have held positions of power in the field for decades.

Patton et al. (2007) suggested that "student affairs and higher education programs and professionals should incorporate an inclusive curriculum that incorporates a dialogue on race" (p. 45) and that the field should "encourage educators and administrators to challenge, question, and critique traditional theoretical perspectives" (p. 48). The challenge now is that the face of college campuses has changed and become more diverse. Persisting racial disparities in higher education outcomes are indicators that higher education has failed to successfully and sufficiently adapt to student populations that are increasingly racially diverse (Museus, Ledesma, & Parker, 2015). Theories that were applicable 50 years ago may not necessarily fit the development and challenges that college students face today.

Graduate academic programs and assistantships need to continue developing curriculum around these contested issues and offering students the opportunity to learn and develop alongside their fellow classmates and faculty. Patton et al. (2007) opined that it is important for "faculty who teach in higher education and student affairs graduate programs [to] become more knowledgeable and aware of the power of the classroom environment in preparing future professionals" (p. 49). Perhaps since that piece was published in 2007, faculty members in those graduate programs have begun to incorporate more discussions and work in the classroom as demonstrated by newer professionals taking a stand against the inequities even amongst peers.

Limited discussion of race and racism. Of 255 articles synthesized for his research, Harper (2012) concluded that minoritized students who are at-risk on-campus were hardly written about. In general, there are fundamental gaps in the research on race and racism in higher education (Banning, Ahuna, & Hughes, 2000; Harper, 2012; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005;

Ortiz & Rhoads, 2000). Some scholars (Diem & Carpenter, 2013; Simmons, 2002) place some of the blame on the lack of conversations occurring in the classroom—mainly in the higher education graduate programs. Finally, some of the seminal research on the topic (Delgado, 1992; Freire, 1970) references how race and racism are discussed in the field, but from very specific points-of-view, namely those of White men who simply quoted and re-quoted one another for posterity's sake.

It was not until the work of Banning et al. (2000) that the field started to take seriously the notion of racism in higher education and its impact on the student, faculty, and staff experience. Their study found that only 72 articles (or 23%) in a 30-year span of articles on student affairs work, focused on racial or ethnic topics (Banning et al., 2000). This analysis of scholarly articles, while interesting in its scope and findings, however, did not mention the words "race" or "racism" more than a few times. This begs the question: if we are to truly study racism and its impact on the campus climate, why can we not even name the topic which we are studying?

Harper and Patton (2007) aim directly at the field of student affairs and its connection to society, in positing that "student affairs educators share responsibility for the reproduction of racially oblivious corporate executives, government and political leaders, and other college graduates who continue to enact laws and manage structures and institutions that maintain White supremacy in the United States" (p. 2). The role of student affairs professionals on a college campus is integral because they interact with students outside of the classroom and, hopefully, impact student lives in a manner complementary to their academic studies. However, "some student affairs educators and faculty [particularly People of Color] may be fatigued by constant reminders of how Students of Color find predominantly White college and universities racist,

alienating, and culturally unresponsive" (Harper & Patton, 2007, p. 2). This sense of fatigue, feeling overwhelmed, and lack of personal support may cause student affairs professionals to shy away from doing the difficult work needed to enact change. However, failure on the part of student affairs professionals to foster critical consciousness about race deprives students of opportunities to learn about what is wrong, offensive, unjust, and oppressive (Harper & Patton, 2007).

Discussions primarily in response to racist incidents. Student affairs professionals are often called on by the institution to "help" when incidents arise. During the summer of 2015 (at my university of employment), when a White university-employed police officer murdered an unarmed Black man off-campus, the senior leadership team of the institution stepped into action. There was a sense of urgency, but not a clear direction or point-of-view on how to respond. Chang (2007) calls this a "knee-jerk reaction [that fails to] see the bigger picture" (p. 34). Harper and Patton (2007) speak more bluntly saying:

> It has become fashionable for race to be treated as an eruptive topic that gets talked about only when some major crisis occurs on campus, such as a racially motivated hate crime. This mishandling of race in higher education reflects how the general American public deals with the topic. (p. 1)

While I do not stand to critique the university's handling of the police officer, the "urgency" with which these authors speak raises some needed questions for my colleagues and me: where is this sense of urgency when there is no incident? Why has it taken such a public incident to finally initiate questions on-campus? Why has this one singular event now thrust racial issues into the spotlight and not the years of subjugation that People of Color and minorities have felt on-campus? As student affairs professionals, it is, in my opinion, critical as a field to continue these conversations even when there are no overt incidents because, for many

students, there are micro "incidents" occurring every single day (W. A. Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2007).

Chang (2007) offers three salient steps to address the bigger picture issue of racism in society and how it pertains to the college environment. First, a reimagined notion of integration should be decoupled from the notion of assimilation, which is how integration has been approached for too long. Institutions of higher learning should lead the way in these societal conversations, not simply act as the byproduct of community issues. Second, we need to be mindful of the larger racial context in which campus dynamics and interactions take place. Third, we must realize that the educational benefits of diversity are inextricably linked to both targeted interventions on campus, and to state and federal policies that remedy the effects of present and past discrimination.

The awareness of the bigger picture is critical for institutions of higher education to not only address the "pop up" issues that get our attention and cause us to spring into action, but also to address the systemic issues that support the very idea that this environment can continue to perpetuate itself on campus. Harper and Patton (2007) recommended that institutions of higher education must first deal with the guilt and discomfort of talking about racism on their campus, and then come to the realization that racism is unlikely to disappear without intentional and large scale effort. Institutions of higher education may have to surrender "one's own privilege and unearned social assets so that they might be shared with others" (p. 3). As a way to push the conversation forward into a solution-based discussion, we must first recognize and take into account racism and its harmful effects on people in postsecondary contexts. Therefore, one of the goals in this dissertation was to name and explain some of these issues, represent voices researched in the study, and ultimately offer suggestions for improvement in the form of a clear

model of support of the individual student affairs professional, the group/profession level, and university/community level.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to center the voices of student affairs professionals and explore the impact of racism on them, both personally and in the work place. This dissertation provided a good opportunity to name and discuss a real problem that impacts the individual student affairs professional, the field as a whole, and the university system overall. While the motivation is anchored through the lens of the student affairs professional (of which I identify), this dissertation is meant to provide context and action steps moving forward for the entire university system to dissect the ways in which racism is plaguing our college campuses. This topic elicited strong emotions, but also provided an avenue for exploring possibilities as well. The field of student affairs needs to have these conversations more often and in safer spaces, without anxiety about the consequences for professional status or job security. I believe there are other ways to show support for our students without fear of retaliation, but I also understand that there need to be safety mechanisms in-place to provide support for one another throughout the process.

Research Questions

The overarching question addressed is: How do incidents of racism on campus impact student affairs professionals?

The secondary questions are:

- How do student affairs professionals describe their experiences with racism on their campuses?

- What are the responsibilities that student affairs professionals bear when confronted with incidents of racism on campus?
- What are the needs of student affairs professionals in those situations, and how do student affairs professionals best prepare to be present to their students in those situations?
- In what ways can student affairs professionals voice their support of the student experience and speak out against the racism on campus?
- What impedes a student affairs professional from supporting their students and one another when incidents occur?
- At what rate are student affairs professionals experiencing incidents of racism on their college campus?

Student affairs professionals are charged with accompanying students along their developmental journeys through college. Those journeys include many ups and downs. When these serious incidents occur, student affairs professionals turn to one another and to the leadership to make sense of the incident and to rely on one another to "solve" the problem. However, they also desperately seek support when personally affected by the incidents. It was my goal to speak to these notions—and emotions—in this dissertation research as a way to hopefully provide a road map or suggestions for improvement in the ways in which we, as a field, respond to incidents of racism, exercise self-care, support students, support one another during these times, and work to create positive change at the university level. If we improve on these fronts, then perhaps it will offer us the ability to be more proactive in combating the very issues that put us in that position in the first place.

Methodology

The detailed methodology is presented in Chapter III. Here I briefly outline the main methods used. To accomplish the task of understanding the experiences and needs of student affairs professionals, this dissertation used a mixed methods approach through an exploratory framework (Creswell, 2015). A sequential exploratory mixed methods design provides the researcher with the opportunity to begin with a qualitative sampling that then helps to develop the quantitative phase of the study (Doyle, Brady, & Byrne, 2009). By beginning the research project with a qualitative analysis, I started from where the participants enter the conversation. The participants in my research represented the diversity within the field of student affairs professionals. My sample consisted of twelve participants, along with a subset focus group of four individuals.

From the data collected from these participants, I then created a survey to explore the breadth and frequency of challenges to dealing with racism on a larger scale. Questions in the survey centered on the pervasiveness of racism in higher education by studying the rate at which participants experienced the phenomenon. The survey also highlighted how the systemic nature of racism in higher education has impacted the participants' livelihood and careers, how they have persisted in the field, their perceptions of university response to racism, and what their needs and wants are to feel fully supported in the work that they do.

From the quantitative data analysis, I returned to the small focus group to share the survey results to elicit more in-depth feedback. I sought out reactions and recommendations for presenting the data in this study, as well as suggestions for how to help the field move forward to enact positive change.

Theoretical Frameworks

To situate this research study in the context of higher education, a brief overview is provided of the theoretical models that are foundational to the overall tenor of the study design. These foundations serve as a framework for the literature review and research design phases of the study.

Social justice lens in mixed methods. The overall purpose of this research study was to contribute to the extensive knowledge base around social justice, and more specifically to working on a college campus and with college students. Therefore, social justice was the lens through which I examined racism on campus and the role of the student affairs professional. The methodological considerations then reflected this purpose. An exploratory design demands a qualitative data approach to honor the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2015). However, to get a sense of the extent to which certain experiences are spread throughout the field, I have added a quantitative approach in Phase 2.

The outcomes of this research are intended to help not only marginalized groups or disadvantaged individuals (Creswell, 2015; Mertens, 2007), but also to assist the field of student affairs generally in responding to and supporting one another when reacting to incidents of racism on-campus. Marginalized voices, in this context, are the student affairs professionals whose collective voice is not normally heard around the topic of racism unless an incident occurs on campus and they are called upon by senior level administrators to "deal with it."

Critical race theory. Because of the aim of social justice, I integrated themes from Critical Race Theory (CRT) throughout the data collection and data analysis. CRT offers a language and understanding that situates race and racism within the context of our country. CRT emerged as a separate field in the 1990s from the critical work of African American legal scholars in the United States. It became an increasingly relevant lens through which to view

racism in higher education. Widely considered to be amongst the first contributors of CRT, Derrick Bell (1995) stated that "the work [of CRT] is often disruptive because its commitment to anti-racism goes well beyond civil rights, integration, affirmative action, and other liberal measures" (p. 4). Extending from this quote about the "disruptive nature" of the theory, CRT has influenced many academic programs and has reached into the student affairs world through the work of Women's Centers, cultural centers, gender studies programs, and other identity-based areas on-campus.

According to Museus et al. (2015) the basic tenets of CRT are:

1. *Racism should be seen, not an aberrant but part of the "normal":* It is an endemic and normalized part of American life.
2. *Challenge dominant ideology:* CRT challenges dominant claims of race-neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy, instead arguing that such ideologies are shaped and maintained by a White supremacist majoritarian structure.
3. *Provide sociohistorical context:* CRT challenges ahistoricism and insists on contextual and historical analyses.
4. *Draw from experiential knowledge:* CRT also recognizes that People of Color are creators of knowledge, including the use of their voices, narratives, stories, and chronicles.
5. *Encourage interdisciplinarity:* Race and racism cannot be fully understood in terms within the boundaries of separate disciplines only.
6. *Commitment to social justice:* CRT works toward the elimination of all forms of oppression as part of a broader project that strives toward social justice and toward ending all forms of oppression.

One key component to CRT is the concept of *counternarrative storytelling*. Counternarratives as a method offer the ability to tell the stories of those whose stories are normally not told (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Oftentimes these individuals are on the margins of society, or, in the case of the student affairs professionals, do not have the political clout or position to speak on their experience. The qualitative portion of the study, based on interviews and two focus groups, provided for me the opportunity to "lift up" the voices of those marginalized populations when discussing the topic of racism in higher education. Few studies within the field directly ask student affairs professionals about how they deal with the everyday nature of racism, or about their experiences stepping in to support students who have experienced racism. The student affairs professionals' voices should be represented in the narrative about racism on-campus.

Furthermore, utilizing a CRT framework in studying racism in higher education challenges the universality of White experience/judgment as the authoritative standard that binds People of Color (Tate, 1997). It moves away from looking at the individual ethnically and racially diverse student as the problem to looking at the environment as an important part of the problem (Banning et al., 2000).

Positionality of the Researcher

I am acutely aware of my White skin and the racial privilege that undoubtedly "showed up" in my work. Throughout the course of this research, it was imperative for me to not only name and explain my positionality in my study but to recognize the inherent privilege that may be speaking through my written words. Put another way, I needed to understand and address the notion that this work centered on racism in higher education was being conducted by a White cisgender male and that my privilege, seen and unseen, is present.

At the same time, as a student affairs professional, I am also an insider of the group whose marginalized voices are represented in this study. A person's identity is also valid, valued, and individual. As a White male working on a college campus, I have experienced racism vicariously at an individual level and seen the ways in which systemic racism has impacted the community and many of my colleagues. As a White male working on a college campus and studying institutional racism, it is disheartening to see the regularity of these events, recognizing that I am also immune to the less visible microaggressions that People of Color experience. My White skin privilege affords me the opportunity to avoid most, if not all, of the harmful acts.

Whiteness. To properly explain my positionality as researcher I must first address the notion of Whiteness and how it shows up in research. Whiteness is about the myth that race does not matter, that Whites are neutral in these matters. Whiteness as a cultural and social phenomenon implies the ability to not have to be aware of one's race in the routine course of everyday life (Bergerson, 2003). The same phenomenon can be applied to many People of Color throughout the world who do not see their own race as being "different" simply because all others around them come from the same racial background. However, Whiteness is a racial construct with real material and social consequences, and the inability or unwillingness of Whites to see our Whiteness as a race is one of the most harmful aspects of supposed neutrality (Bergerson, 2003). That being said, members of an organization seeking White dominance[2] in the world (the Ku

[2] The terms "dominance" and "supremacy" were utilized interchangeably by participants throughout the dissertation study and data gathering phases. If it is used in a direct quote, I leave the term "supremacy" even though that term is often utilized to describe extremist groups. In the context of higher education, the notion of "dominance" seems more apt to capture racial, class, patriarchal and other structural forms of inequality that colleges and universities were built on and that are sustained today.

Klux Klan for example) are very aware of their Whiteness and utilize that measure to denigrate others.

It is often difficult for White people, particularly those who have not done any sort of work exploring White as a racial category, to consider the impact of this passé attitude towards their cultural, social, economic, and political privilege. One of these reasons, according to Bergerson (2003), is that "Whites do not want to consider race and racism as everyday realities, because doing so requires them to face their own racist behaviors as well as the privileges that come from being White" (p. 53).

This lack of recognition can lead to collateral damage when attempting to research a topic such as this. Collateral damage, in the case of a White researcher studying race, is the assumption that simply using CRT as a theoretical framework, means that the experiences (of People of Color) are known to the researcher (White). Bergerson (2003) cautioned White researchers by suggesting that CRT not be used as a form of colonialism in research. However, Bergerson (2003) stated that "White researchers should attempt to use CRT in their work, but should do so strategically" (p. 59). As a result, I was keenly aware of the relationships I developed with the participants in my study. The work of Reason, Scales, and Millar (2005) resonated with me when they stated that "recognizing one's own power and privilege, and its impact on relationships with others, however, often leads to negative emotions like guilt or defensiveness that can become barriers" (p. 56). When I attended the Social Justice Training Institute in 2010, I was confronted head-on with this notion of guilt and defensiveness. Since the institute, and the subsequent experiences I have been a part of, I have understood that those feelings are a part of the process of peeling back the layers of White privilege. Previously, I was unaware that epistemic privilege allows Whites to remain oblivious to these unearned assets and

ignore the obstacles presented to People of Color (Reason et al., 2005). Now, however, aiming to hold my "Whiteness means recognizing both the positive and negative attributes associated with it" (p. 61).

While the profession of student affairs attracts a diverse pool of individuals, issues of race and racism *within* the field abound. The other side of racism, all too often, is the reproduction of *Whiteness*. Frankenberg (1993) stated that, "Whiteness refers to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and moreover are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination" (p. 6). Racism has impacted the field of student affairs from within; thus, it was imperative to include an examination of Whiteness studies in this research. Since this research was conducted by a White person, and there were other White people involved in this research who function in a university culture of White normativity, an honest look into this inherently related mode of racism, that is, Whiteness as an instrument of oppression, was imperative. As hooks (1994) stated, "Despite the focus on diversity, our desires for inclusion . . . a spirit of tokenism prevails. That is why it is crucial that 'Whiteness' be studied" (p. 43).

Researcher neutrality. One aspect of positionality, certainly from the point-of-view of a White researcher, is understanding the concept of neutrality. Critical Race Theory teaches us that the systemic view of the world around us is from a White perspective. On a scale, Whiteness is often revered as the "normal" vantage point. However, CRT and "centering race and seeing Whiteness as a race allows us to understand that White is not the neutral base from which all else is judged" (Bergerson, 2003, p. 59). Neutrality and objectivity are understood not only as unattainable, but also as undesirable entities that lead to the misrepresentation of the experiences

of People of Color and detract from the kind of knowledge that becomes possible through relationships (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013).

The participants in the qualitative sample came from a purposeful sampling of colleagues whom I know to be passionate about the topic and their work in student affairs, and with whom I already have a collegial relationship. The sampling was not representative but purposeful in interviewing people who would be honest and approach the topic with an essence for digging deeper into the lived experiences of participants. This relationship afforded me the opportunity to conduct and be a part of open and honest dialogue where trust was a central value. My role as a critical White researcher positions me to engage in conversations with other White student affairs professionals as well as Student Affairs Professionals of Color.

Ultimately, the positionality of the researcher impacted the final product of the findings and how they are presented. My experiences as a White professional were present in the study; therefore, I tried to use my insider position and positionality to listen to the experiences of those I am working alongside and consult with the participants regularly to ensure that I properly represented their stories. It is necessary, as Bergerson (2003) pointed out, "to look at educational structures and institutions through the eyes of all participants, relying on their lived experiences to ensure that our research questions and methods address these difficult issues" (p. 60). This is a strong reminder of the implications my research may have on my field of study as well as the integral role that my positionality played in the research process.

Definition of Terms

It is important to clarify how I define several keys terms I use in this dissertation. Below are my operational definitions. This section of definitions is constructed in alphabetical order, rather than implied importance to the study.

Diversity and social justice. Diversity and social justice are two important terms to define in this section to explain clearly the scope of this research. *Diversity* at its core explains the range of experiences and identities that a person or culture can exhibit. As Essed (1996) explained, diversity is more than toleration, and that it can be "a valuable element in achieving excellence" and "developing an appreciation of diversity is a process of cultural change" (p. 89).

Ahmed (2012) spent considerable time discussing *diversity* and the way in which (White) people have equated it with *racism* as a "scary" word. Detaching diversity from racism, and thereby not seeing it as this scary word, allows people to be more comfortable with the term and appreciate its possibilities. Ahmed stated that within higher education, diversity work can refer to work that has the explicit aim of transforming an institution" (p. 175). However, she criticizes diversity advocates on campus for avoiding the critical work necessary when dealing with racism. In speaking about diversity work on a college campus, Ahmed concluded that it "requires insistence . . . to go against the flow, and you are judged to be going against the flow because you are insistent" (p. 186).

Social justice, on the other hand, is different in that it adds the action element of diversity and appreciation. *Social justice* addresses structural disparities in the human condition that create disproportional acquisition of economic, social, or political power, the effect of which leaves people exploited, marginalized, and denied dignity and respect by the dominant culture (McKevitt, 2010). A person can appreciate diversity and take a step into the world of social justice through activism or simply recognition of social inequity.

Individual, institutional, and cultural racism. Borrowing from sociological literature, Reason et al. (2005) distinguished between individual, institutional, and cultural forms of racism. *Individual racism* refers to the attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs of the individuals that result in

unequal treatment of individuals on the basis of their racial or ethnic group (Jones, 2002). This can be construed as intentional or unintentional.

Institutional racism is defined as a pattern of racism embedded in the policies and practices of social institutions—the educational system, the legal system, the economic system, family, state, and religion—that has a negative impact upon certain ethnic groups (Jones, 2002). Institutional racism as well can be intentional or unintentional but is focused not on individual action but on systems, whether at the level of organizations or societal institutions, such as education, the labor market, housing, or the workings of government.

Institutional racism involves systemic policies of oppression directed against People of Color and implemented by and through the institutions of society (Lykes, 1983). A person may experience institutional racism through the university's inability to support Students of Color through the application process, through the red tape of the financial aid practices, through a lack of hiring Faculty and Staff of Color who may be seen as mentors for students, and through incidents of racial microaggressions in and outside of the classroom.

Institutional racism has evolved as a system to limit the options that People of Color have and, in essence, has given Whites the pass to no longer be overtly prejudiced (Lykes, 1983). White stakeholders (including students, faculty, trustees, alumni, etc.) have established cultural norms that have governed these campuses for decades and that extreme underrepresentation is usually accompanied by a set of experiences that undermine espoused institutional commitments to fostering inclusive campus climates (Harper, 2013).

Institutional racism on college campuses, and the climate that is then perpetuated, is also manifest in the way it excludes access or isolates Students and Faculty of Color. Harper refers to the concept of o*nlyness* as the psychoemotional burden of having to strategically navigate a

racially politicized space occupied by few peers, role models, and guardians from one's same racial or ethnic group (Harper, 2013). An example of this phenomenon is the Student of Color sitting in a class where he/she/they have to represent their entire culture due to a lack of other students from similar backgrounds. Or, a White professor of history designing their curriculum and failing to include diverse voices and historians in the conversation. These isolating incidents can cause an overwhelming sense of *onlyness*, and loneliness, for a student on their campus.

Individual racism can also be seen as an inaccurate short cut for individual *expressions* of racism. These expressions are often intertwined with *institutional* racism and the societal and structural make-up that supports them. As Tatum (2000) suggested "this definition of racism is not only a personal ideology based on racial prejudice, but a *system* involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices as well as the beliefs and actions of individuals" (p. 80). Contesting the notion of individual racism Essed (1996) stated that racism actually is a social phenomenon, a process that is structural even when people may express or experience it on an individual level. These theoretical assumptions are at the center of CRT.

Finally, c*ultural racism* is the way racism works through norms, values, symbols, communication systems, religion, pedagogies, and other dimensions of culture with the impact of marginalizing or dehumanizing particular cultures and ethnic groups. Reason et al. (2005) connect higher education to greater society by first recognizing that the structure of race in society is an essential intellectual understanding, and that student affairs professionals must reflect on their own racial justice attitudes and actions if they are to create a college environment that is inclusive for all.

Intersectionality. No one individual is made up solely of a single identity or lens with which they see the world. We are complicated human beings who not only bring our life

experiences to our everyday roles, but the paradigms in which our worldviews have been shaped. The concept of intersectionality is important to this research because viewing racism and its impact is not solely through a racial lens. A person's gender expression or sexual orientation, their religious beliefs or physical abilities, their ethnicity and socioeconomic status, all intertwine to help an individual make sense of their experiences. It is not plausible to simply examine one part of a person's identity. It is far too narrow of a view to examine a person's development through one single identity dimension (Jones & McEwen, 2000).

This research study must take into consideration a participant's intersectionality. Crenshaw's (1991) focus on intersectionality illustrated the "need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed" (p. 1245). A person in this study will certainly be reflecting on issues of race and racism on their college campus. However, they will not be doing so only through their racial identity lens. There will be times when a person's racial identity will intersect with their gender expression identity. There also will be moments when a person's socioeconomic status or nationality will likely seep into the conversation about race and racism. To prepare for these types of interactions, a succinct definition of this term is required.

According to the African American Policy Forum (n.d.), intersectionality

> is a concept that enables us to recognize the fact that perceived group membership can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias, yet because we are simultaneously members of many groups, our complex identities can shape the specific way we each experience that bias. (p. 3)

Racial identity development. Racial identity and racial identity development were defined by Helms (1990) as

> a sense of group or collective identity based on one's *perception* that he or she shares a common racial heritage with a particular racial group . . . racial identity development

> theory concerns the psychological implications of racial-group membership, that is belief systems that evolve in reaction to perceived differential racial-group membership. (p. 3)

Labeling a person's racial identity in and of itself can create issues both personally as well as professionally, particularly for many Whites. Many people fear the thought of themselves, or their actions, as being racist, and therefore retreat to a level of comfort in which their dominant identity affords them the opportunity to simply not confront their privilege (Watt, 2007). Sue and Constantine (2007), studying White identity specifically, purported that "White people's [confrontation] of their own racism is likely to elicit strong feelings of defensiveness and anger by them, and these intense feelings often serve as emotional roadblocks to acknowledging their racism" (p. 140). This White normative perspective, however, does not include the fact that for People of Color, racial identity is also associated with racism. White privilege allows White individuals to not have to recognize a racial identity, while simultaneously *always* reminding People of Color of their racial identity, and therefore racism.

For White people, racial identity development encompasses the examination of one's power and privilege as it relates to their race and an acknowledgement that just their sheer being may or may not put them at an advantage. Sue and Constantine (2007) questioned:

> If the veil of invisibility is lifted from their [White peoples'] eyes, if the pain of racism and its detrimental consequences to whole Groups of Color can no longer be denied, and if their personal advantage is based on the unfair disadvantage of others, then the question becomes how could Whites possibly allow racism to continue without any effort on their part to rectify the situation? (p. 141)

This concept of invisibility is salient in this research because the aggression of everyday racism is (overwhelmingly) visible to the many People of Color. For people working on a college campus, racism occurs regularly, but even as a race critical White scholar, I can oftentimes remain oblivious to these acts. It is so easy for a White person to avoid this topic because the pain of racism is not in their everyday life. But how powerful would it be to have Whites more

cognizant of their privilege, more aware of the effects that racial privilege has on others, and a willingness to challenge personal advantages in order to achieve equality?

Racial microaggressions. Racial microaggressions tend to be one of the more formidable and reoccurring events that Students of Color experience when attending their institutions of higher education. According to Sue and Constantine (2007), *microaggressions* are, in the context of race, "brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to People of Color because they belong to a racial minority group" (p. 137). Microaggressions is a general term inclusive of, but not limited to, race. Microaggressions can be so minute that the aggressor hardly recognizes their behavior. Boysen (2012) states that "people who commit microaggressions frequently do so subtly and unintentionally; thus, microaggressions are characterized by ambiguity because of the differing perspectives of the microaggressor and the target" (p. 123). Categories of racial microaggressions include *microinsult* (behavioral/verbal remarks that demean a person); *microassault* (explicit racial denigrations); *microinvalidation* (verbal comments/behaviors that exclude or negate); and *environmental microaggressions* (racial insults at a systemic level), (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013).

Racism. In order to define *racism*, one must synthesize the vastness of the topic and find solace in the fact that it is not only a very difficult term to succinctly define, but is also terminology heavily ingrained in people's lives, whatever their racial background in the United States. Countless scholars and theorists have defined racism from various scholarly angles. Bonilla-Silva (1996) harkened to van den Berghe's definition that

> racism is any set of beliefs that organic, genetically transmitted differences (whether real or imagined) between human groups are intrinsically associated with the presence or the absence of certain socially relevant abilities or characteristics, hence that such differences are a legitimate basis of invidious distinctions between groups socially defined as races. (p. 465)

Johnson-Ahorlu (2012) defines racism as

> The combination and interaction of the following three factors: (1) one group believes itself to be superior; (2) the group that believes itself to be superior has power to carry out racist behaviors; and (3) racism affects multiple racial/ethnic groups. (p. 637)

In an effort to parse out the differences between *racism* and *stereotypes*, Johnson-Ahorlu (2012) states that "stereotypes can be defined as gross generalizations applied to a group of people with some level of share characteristics" (p. 637) and combines both in a more succinct sociological definition of "racism is a system of oppression and stereotypes are the rationale for such oppression" (p. 637). Racism can manifest overtly or covertly, intentionally or unintentionally, and individually or collectively (Reason et al., 2005).

Racism, as Essed (1991) demonstrated, "is a structure because racial and ethnic dominance exists in and is reproduced by the system through the formulation and application of rules, laws, and regulations and through access to and the allocation of resources" (p. 44). Essed (1991) continued, explaining that "racism is a *process* because structures and ideologies do not exist outside the everyday practices through which they are created and confirmed" (original emphasis; p. 44). This framework reacts to the structure and process, and allows for People of Color in our society to speak from experience framed by racism (Tate, 1997). Harper (2012) offered one of the more comprehensive, and accessible, definitions of racism when he stated

> [It is] individual actions (both intentional and unconscious) that engender marginalization and inflict varying degrees of harm on minoritized persons; structures that determine and cyclically remanufacture racial inequity; and institutional norms that sustain White privilege and permit the ongoing subordination of minoritized persons. (p. 10)

Student affairs professionals. Much of my work is through the lens of college administration. I identify as a *student affairs professional*, a person who works on a college campus as a staff person supporting student growth and development outside of the classroom. Many student affairs professionals receive master's degrees in education, more specifically either

college student personnel or higher education administration. I define the key term of student affairs professionals, because much of the research focuses on faculty members (e.g., Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1992; Scheurich & Young, 2002; Wolfe, 2013) and only a finite amount from the student affairs perspective (e.g., Patton et al., 2007; Reason et al., 2005; Watt, 2007). Faculty members writing on this topic are mainly from the field of education and teaching in those master's programs, while others are coming from more of the social sciences arena, specifically sociology and anthropology and interdisciplinary fields including racial and ethnic studies or women's/gender studies.

These writings are all very important to this research, but it is imperative to note that most of a student's time on a college campus is actually spent outside of the classroom. When a student is not in class then they are likely interacting with and being supported by someone in the student affairs profession. One of the claims that I make in this research is the fact that racism is not a topic typically discussed within the academy (aside from some specific courses that students could select). Lately, much of the conversation on racism within the student affairs profession has stemmed from reactions to what is going on in the world around us and how we support students through these experiences (e.g., Kolowich, 2016). Furthermore, racism's impact on the college campus is not a topic in which faculty and staff are coming together to discuss, research, or write on. We each hold our own perspective on students and their experiences and bridging the two towers of academia (academics and non-academics) can only serve to better our support of students, faculty and staff, particularly if they are experiencing racism on-campus.

Whiteness studies. Stemming from women's studies, the humanities (Morrison, 1992), and the social sciences, the term "Whiteness" has become a familiar focus of attention for scholars looking at the structural makeup of race and racism in today's world. In contrast to the

usual practice of studying the "problem" of "minority groups," the "Whiteness studies" paradigm makes problematic the identity and practices of the dominant group (Gabriel, 1998).

Whiteness studies is aimed at challenging White hegemony by focusing attention on the effects of "Whiteness" on intergroup relations (DiAngelo, 2015; Doane & Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Levine-Rasky, 2016). Whiteness, for much of history, was absent in the conversation as studies tended not to see the racial category of "White" as a *cultural* construct that is foundational to the very reason racial disadvantages exist. White racial identity did not come to full fruition until 1990 (Helms, 1990) when it was theorized and accepted as part of the conversation. To the extent that Whiteness is the unexamined center of American society, Whites are less likely to consider their own White identity (Doane, 2003). This was certainly my own experience growing up and, quite frankly, was not challenged until I was in graduate school. The notion that *White* is a racial construct and a social identity and that *White privilege* only truly began to be explored through feminist theories of the late 1980s (McIntosh, 1988), sheds light on the importance of viewing racism through the lens of Whiteness studies. Thus, this dissertation revealed that racism still permeates our own internal "family" of student affairs professionals.

The irony of studying racism in higher education and focusing on the experiences of student affairs professionals is, however, that many Whites within the field think of themselves as anti-racist or social justice advocates.

Ethical Implications of the Study

Throughout this research process several measures were put in place to protect the participants. An ethics application was submitted to the Antioch University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to assess any risks or ethical concerns to keep the participants from any harm. The qualitative data received during the interviews were kept confidential and each participant was

asked to provide a pseudonym to uniquely identify their comments during the coding and analysis phases. This pseudonym was used in the discussion section of the research study as were general statements regarding the participants' institution type and location. Participants in the focus group were asked to keep the conversations confidential and all data recorded was stored electronically behind a unique password. All participants in the qualitative portions of the study came from my personal professional network. Participants in the survey phase came from the professional network detailed in the methodology chapter.

This research project asked participants to discuss the emotional toll that racism has taken on their personal and professional lives. As the researcher I practiced active listening skills to ensure that trust was maintained, and I allowed the participants to read over their transcripts prior to analysis to ensure their voices were properly represented. This trust was also supported through the ethical practices of kindness, respect, and empathy.

Consent for the study was both verbal and written prior to interviews. A copy of the IRB was provided to each participant in the interviews and group process phases, as well as accompanying the electronic survey that was administered in the quantitative phase. The intent of the consent statement is to provide the participant an explanation of the study, the purpose of the methodology, and inform the participants of their voluntary status in the research. Participants were given the opportunity to remove themselves from the study at any point of time without consequence.

Summary of the Dissertation Chapters

Chapter II dives deeper into the current literature on the topic of racism in higher education and the climate on college campuses. I describe the history of writings on racism in higher education, the fundamental principles that researchers are focusing on, and the various

gaps that the research is creating. As mentioned previously, most of the writing on the topic focuses on the student or faculty experience. While that notion is extremely important to the field, it is incomplete. Very few researchers have written or studied the ways in which racism is impacting staff (specifically student affairs professionals), and none are discussing the needs of these individuals when faced with challenges of racism. The purpose of this chapter is to illuminate this gap in the research while simultaneously making a case for this dissertation as a framework for support and improvement.

Chapter III argues for the chosen methodology. This chapter discusses the history of the development of mixed methods research as well as the rationale for using it in this dissertation. I describe the exploratory sequential design model (within the social justice framework), the phases of the design structure, integration of the qualitative and quantitative data, as well as the data analysis procedures that I were utilized. The final section of Chapter III explores the anticipated limitations of the study.

Chapter IV lays out the fundamental research findings and results. I start with answering the research questions with data from the qualitative and quantitative phases. I also discuss the integration of the data in this section and inferences I made.

Finally, in Chapter V, I present the overall discussion of the findings, limitations of the study, contributions to the field of student affairs and higher education, and recommendations for future research. The chapter concludes with the introduction and description of a model of support that was developed from these findings. This model illuminates the present issues of racism on-campus, shares barriers and impediments to change, and offers suggestions for the individual level, group level, and community level to take to enact positive change.

Chapter II: Critical Review of Relevant Theory, Research, and Practice

Chapter II is structured around the tenets of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a way to situate racism within the context of higher education. CRT was developed to help eradicate racism through its tenets and provide language for studying the topic. These CRT tenets are: (a) provide historical context, (b) challenge dominant ideology, (c) review that racism should be seen, not as an aberrant but part of the "normal," (d) draw from experiential knowledge, (e) encourage interdisciplinarity, and (f) commit to social justice.

Relevant literature is examined within the tenets of CRT to not only show the vastness of the topic at-hand, but also illuminate the gaps that exist in the research that specifically exclude racism's impact on student affairs professionals. CRT is relevant to the field of student affairs because as scholars and practitioners, professionals in the field should be keenly aware of racism on their campus and its impact on the individual, the field as a whole, and the entire university community.

This chapter begins with a brief look at the history of higher education in the United States and what legislation impacted the systemic structure of racism in the field. Following that description are sections designed to highlight the important work already being studied and published on the topic of racism in higher education and its impact on students, faculty, and staff. These selected works challenge the dominant ideology of the theories and the pejorative narratives that make up the field of student affairs. Experiential knowledge is a key piece to this particular work and this section demonstrates the need for continued support of the counternarratives by highlighting authors who have utilized this method in their studies. Finally, this chapter concludes with sections based on interdisciplinarity and a commitment to social justice. To fully encapsulate the work of this dissertation study, it is imperative to not only look

at this type of work through the lens of college administration, but to bring in some of the important work already completed in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and human development. To be committed to social justice is to be committed to understanding the topic from various lenses and identities that make up the human experience.

Throughout this chapter, I have included specific examples of racism that have occurred on college campuses. It is because of these examples, and the tremendous collateral impact that they have had on colleagues and, to a lesser extent, myself, that I have chosen to approach this topic.

At its very basic level, I approached this literature review with the following question in mind: What is the impact of racism, whether it be overt or covert acts, on student affairs professionals? From there additional questions guided my search including looking at the topic from the perspective of specific populations, faculty and student experiences, as well as some examples of international incidents. Keyword searches through article databases included: racism, institutional racism, racism on college campuses, student affairs responses to racism, impact of racism on students, faculty and staff, as well as deep dives into specific incidents that have had a lasting impact on the field.

As with any topic as broad as "racism," it was quite easy to follow one particular line of thinking quite far from the original intent. Because racism occurs daily on our college campuses, and because the current climate in the United States *encourages* these abhorrent acts, it is difficult to know when to "turn the faucet off" of the information intake process. While it has not been an easy process to select which articles and pieces to include in this review due to the vastness of the topic, I have carefully looked to include works that illuminate the more specific topic of racism and student affairs professionals. This method has garnered several strong

examples shine the light on glaring gaps that need to be addressed. With that in mind, the overall goal of Chapter II is to highlight that higher education, historically grounded in the broader societal White racial hierarchy is part of the very (re)production of racism. Therefore, its impact on the student affairs professional needs to be discussed in a more thorough and direct manner. By looking at the literature that has already paved the way for this topic, and by situating examples within the context, I am hopeful that the reader will see how the method for study and my participants' stories achieved this goal.

Provide Sociohistorical Context

During my time in graduate school, I was required to take a history of higher education course; a course taught with the purpose of exposing students to the American adaptation of English secondary education. While we were taught to believe that our earliest colleges and universities were constructed and built on the basis of the White, male meritocracy of the times, never did the conversation come close to exploring how the early history of the United States and higher education converged to create the institutional racism that we see today.

The history of US higher education was built on policies and procedures meant to promote Whites [and at higher administration and faculty levels, foremost White males] in society while withholding opportunities for another. Dating back to the country's first colleges and universities, segregation and unequal practices were built into the fiber of the institutions (Brubacher & Rudy, 2017). The beginning of this chapter situates the topic of this research around the CRT tenet of sociohistorical context and perspective.

Establishing segregated higher education institutions. In their recent study, Museus et al. (2015) offered an extensive overview on how American institutions of higher learning transformed into the institutions we know today. Two pieces of legislation, the Morrill Land

Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890, first established state-supported institutions which, in turn, through a series of intended and unintended consequences resulted in the segregation of Black and White public postsecondary campuses. While the second Morrill Land Act forbade racial discrimination in admissions policies, a state could evade the provision by developing separate institutions that were deemed "just," but not necessarily equal (Earl, Baldwin, Gordon, & Guyer, 1995). Educational institutions that encouraged Black enrollment often emphasized mechanics, agriculture, and industrial fields specific to Blacks (Museus et al., 2015). Eighty-two years later, the G.I. Bill, formally known as the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, was passed and intended to grant educational benefits to *all* eligible returning World War II servicemen, but in fact benefited primarily if not only White male veterans. Veterans of Color and women veterans were often denied benefits covered in the G.I. Bill. Women veterans faced limited opportunities for enrollment by colleges and universities to make way for their male counterparts, and Veterans of Color lacked access to the benefits in part because of the segregated educational opportunities that resulted from struggles over equal and integrated implementation of the Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890 (Earl et al., 1995). Still these systemic structures of institutional racism in higher education persist today.

Affirmative action. The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s successfully pushed the government to pursue desegregation in education. In response, many universities employed practices to admit larger numbers of historically underrepresented students into their institutions. Ironically, the opposite was achieved because they used standardized test scores during the admissions process, which, evidence indicates, are biased against racial minorities and those outside the middle class (Jencks & Phillips, 2011). In effect, standardized tests serve as a proxy for (racialized) socioeconomic status, and function as a mechanism to promote the institutions'

selection of applicants from more affluent backgrounds (Museus et al., 2015). To combat the continued inequity of admissions practices, affirmative action principles were adopted. According to Museus et al. (2015), affirmative action operates as "a mechanism to minimize the effects of racism and other forms of social oppression affecting marginalized populations" (p. 56). These practices have historically included focusing resources on recruiting students from previously underrepresented areas, offering scholarships or other financial benefits to applying to a school, or permitting a person's racial category to be used in the decision of whether or not to admit the individual to the college or university. Prior to the famous Supreme Court case of *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), many universities kept separate "White" lists of applicants and "People of Color" lists to ensure representation. The resulting decision by the Supreme Court upheld the notion that race could be used as admissions criteria; however, quotas (or percentage of seats that must be held by People of Color), were ruled unconstitutional. Instead, many college admissions departments developed a points system and included race as a relevant point to be added to an applicant's materials (Downing et al., 2002).

Affirmative action cases involving higher education have been challenged in the courts many times since 1978. This "points added" approach has been challenged in the courts since the landmark Bakke case, and several states now do not include the racial category in their admissions practice (Downing et al., 2002). Additionally, many Whites have delegitimized affirmative action principles in admissions criteria claiming they are "unfair" to members of the majority group (Downing et al., 2002). In 1996, Californians voted to discontinue the practice of allowing race to be a factor in admissions criteria. Known by the ballot initiative title "Proposition 209," it has been challenged three times in the court system, most recently in 2012 where the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals rejected the challenge; racial categories are still not

utilized in the University of California system (Kidder, 2013). Affirmative action processes were recently upheld in the Supreme Court case of *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003).

In 2008, Abigail Fisher sued the University of Texas over its admissions criteria claiming that her admission was given instead to a Person of Color. Her rationale in the lawsuit was that a person's race should not have been a factor and that people should not be judged based on their race. The question that grappled the Supreme Court at the time consisted of weighing the difference between the "small increase in diversity numbers" against the "extraordinary power to consider race." The United Stated Supreme Court ruled in 2013 that strict scrutiny should be applied in their admissions processes and in 2016 upheld the University of Texas's consideration of race in their admissions processes.

Opponents of affirmative action contend that these practices unfairly set-up People of Color for failure by placing them into "selective" universities that they may not be prepared to handle. Opponents to affirmative action practices also claim that such practices pit Asian American students against their Black, Latino, or Indigenous counterparts due to perceived attainment of academic success (Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004). Supporters, on the other hand, contend that affirmative action principles put more systems in place for People of Color so that students do not always feel as though they are the only person speaking for an entire race in the classroom. Justice Clarence Thomas, the Court's only African American member, has long opposed affirmative action, while the more liberal leaning justices have supported affirmative action cases in the past stating that they create more diverse and richer learning environments for all students.

Rising costs of higher education. In addition to recruitment tactics, the rise in tuition costs, coupled with an increased reliance on loans in financial aid packages, and high levels of

debt aversion among college Students of Color, can serve to limit access to higher education opportunities (Heller, 2006). Museus et al. (2015) argued that "even as college education becomes more and more indispensable, the affordability of quality educational opportunities continues to be inequitable, especially for low-income students and Students of Color" (p. 59). This inequality can certainly lead to low-income students being denied access to admission into their school of choice. If a student does not come from a family whose income can support their academic endeavors, or does not qualify for student loans, then the student's goal of obtaining a degree has been thwarted even before it has begun. Additionally, the student debt crisis has reached unparalleled levels (Friedman, 2017) leaving students in a very difficult position of having to pay back on loans that their socioeconomic background may prohibit them from being able to do. Higher education has always been a class system, favoring those who can afford it over those who cannot, and today that reality is only more apparent. This system leaves out Students of Color at a disproportionately high rate (McDonough & Calderone, 2006).

Policies, procedures, and the chief diversity officer. Today it is socially and politically risky (nor financially viable) to be marked a campus that racially discriminates. Universities have adopted various measures to promote diversity and many have gone so far as to employ individuals on their campus whose daily job it is to work on issues pertinent to the topic.

Since the 1970s, universities have come to reflect the changing landscape of society around them and many have written and employed anti-discrimination policies, implemented Title VI and Title IX policies to address issues of discrimination based on gender and gender expression, and have extensive legal counsel offices. Some larger universities have gone so far as to employ legal experts on equity and equal opportunity measures, and almost every single college and university in the country has an equal opportunity employment statement in their

hiring practices. Many colleges and universities also have bias-related incident teams which are typically made up of student affairs professionals, faculty, and upper administrators who have the role on-campus of responding to incidents of bias. Recent research, however, has found that "most of these teams spend relatively little time on their primary stated functions—trying to educate the campus community about bias—and instead devote their efforts mainly to punishing and condemning the perpetrators of specific acts" (Schmidt, 2015, p. 1). However important these public policies or response teams are, institutionalized racism can still be "manifested in the policies, practices, and procedures . . . that may, directly or indirectly, consciously or unwittingly, promote, sustain, or entrench differential advantage or privilege for people of certain races" (Henry & Tator, 2009, p. 29).

Today, many institutions of higher education have undertaken the appointment of the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). Ideally the role of the CDO is to have a direct line to the president or highest ranking official at the university and provide outreach and support to all involved in the campus community as it pertains to diversity and inclusion. CDOs are typically involved in decision-making around diversity policies, recruitment plans and support multicultural centers and events. However, according to Wilson (2013), CDOs can often be the victims of tokenism and "may be visible representatives of an organizational leadership structure, but functionally invisible" (p. 434). The campus community may be reluctant to abide by campus policies enacted by the CDO or viewed skeptically by some who only see the individual as a "public relations" move by the university. Additionally, many CDO offices, evidence suggests, are poorly funded and do not have the proper resources to investigate incidents and to *create* real change on their campus (Henry & Tator, 2009).

Working with the CDO is effective when conducting trainings, leading the efforts to respond to negative incidents, and being seen as a spokesperson for the president's office when it relates to diversity issues on-campus. A recent local example involved the CDO responding to students who were challenging the administration on its response to sexual misconduct on campus. Twenty students recently organized a sit-in outside the doors of the president's office. The students held signs that supported survivors and questioned the administration's role in advocating for resources for victims of these crimes. The students were peaceful in their protest of the president's office and when the president exited her office, a video shows her walking through the students, into the elevator and out of the building without engagement (Aragon, 2016). Moments later the CDO exited her office, took a seat next to the student protestors, and engaged them in a dialogue. The next day a statement was released to the campus community by the CDO (co-signed by the president) that outlined several points of the conversation and next steps. Incidents of racism have garnered similar responses typically led by the CDO which seems to fit the notion that this person has the "president's ear" but perhaps not enough political power or resources to enact true and real change on the campus. The responsibility of supporting the students on a day-to-day basis still rests on the student affairs professional.

Challenge Dominant Ideology

The second tenet of CRT in this review challenges the dominant ideology. What role does race and racism play on a daily basis in the lives of people on a college campus? How do students, faculty, and student affairs professionals challenge the dominant ideology that supports these incidents? To answer those questions, we must be cognizant of the taken for granted assumptions within higher education about race, which are based on two critical points: that the

structure of higher education is built on the normality of Whiteness, and to maintain that, the system must perpetuate a colorblind ideology.

According to Feagin (1992), "the college subculture is White-normed; discrimination is reinforced by the everyday, unstated assumptions about the priority of Whiteness" (p. 577). Essed (2013) adds that "neither diversity nor anti-racism are embraced in the still largely White-dominated universities" (p. 1394). Because the history of higher education has been built on White ideals and perpetuated by White leaders, many considerations of People of Color, or even reference to racist events, are not part of common conversations occurring on-campus.

Moreover, the priority of Whiteness in higher education institutions is sustained, among others, through politics of colorblindness. Park (2011) argued that those "who promote a color-blind approach to race relations also promote the idea that we are living in a post-racial society in which race is an irrelevant construct and racism is a thing of the past" (p. 227). This color-blind mentality stems from privilege and power. The privilege to "turn off" a person's racial context holds a vast amount of power in our society. This power is almost exclusively attributed to Whiteness. There is privilege, of course, in ignoring racial disparity. Jensen (2005) stated that "in a society in which White supremacy has structured every aspect of our world, there can be no claim to neutrality" (p. 17). However, through the recognition of the impact of race and racism in higher education, we can begin to challenge this dominant ideology.

We experience the college campus differently depending on race. Although many may believe, or experience, a college campus as transformative, for others it can be a more difficult path. Some research reveals that Students of Color enter White dominant institutions expecting to experience racism (Harper & Hurtado, 2007), while other research indicates that most Whites insist that minorities (especially Blacks) are the ones responsible for whatever "race problem"

exists in this country (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). These studies point to the "eye masks" many wear when being asked about racial equality on our campuses. I would argue that this includes how Student Affairs Professionals of Color might expect to experience racism in their daily work, versus how White student affairs professionals probably "do not see" the racism around them.

Racism still exists on college campuses. A report from the U.S. Department of Education indicates that incidents of racial harassment and acts of violence are still very prevalent on our college campuses. The Office for Civil Rights within the Department reported in its 2016 annual report that there were 198 complaints attributed to racism on campus (Lhamon, 2016). While this number is down from 241 reported incidents in 1998 (Chesler, Lewis, & Crowfoot, 2005), a recent study suggested that only 13% of racial incidents on campus are reported to a campus authority (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012). One can assume by comparing these reports that incidents occur on a far too regular basis, but are very rarely reported.

Since the election of Donald Trump in November 2016 to the U.S. presidency, many Muslim students, gender nonconforming students, students identifying at lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, and other Students of Color have reported an increase in harassment on their campus. These incidents have included many social media posts denouncing the legitimacy of certain students, physical altercations with female students in hijab and fliers being posted throughout residence halls calling for an end of what they perceive as political correctness (Jaschik, 2016b).

Interpersonal racism on campus. Interpersonal racism on campus is often inter-student but can also be seen in examples of White faculty's disbelief that an excellent essay could possibly have been written by a Student of Color herself. Examples of interpersonal racism on campus are plentiful and include a racial slur drawn on a sidewalk in the middle of a Catholic

college campus (Sullivan & Plumb, 2016), racially offensive shirts created by a sorority (Chuck, 2016), or even a White board of trustees member posting a picture of President Obama in a noose on his Facebook page (A. A. Smith, 2016). A simple quick search in the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* highlighted the numerous, and casual nature, of this phenomenon.

Impact of racism on an individual. The impact of racism on a person can be significant, particularly within the college campus environment. Racism can cause psychological trauma and have a negative impact on one's overall health (Paradies, 2006). A review of 138 empirical studies showed a strong association between self-reported incidents of racism and mental health issues and other health-related behaviors (Paradies, 2006). Students of Color are more likely to experience racial isolation and tokenism, causing them to be at greatest risk of dropping out of college (Museus et al., 2015). Although much of the research about experiences of racism on campus focused on student and faculty experiences, I argue that these same reactions to racism (e.g., risk of dropping out, feelings of isolation, fear and defensiveness) are also applicable to those who have a career in supporting those students, as racism dramatically impacts the overall campus climate.

Structural racism in higher education. Structural racism manifests in higher education in many different forms. Examples may include the lack of representation of People of Color in upper level administrative roles, a curriculum that lacks the exploration of theories derived from Scholars of Color, or even the appearance of roommate matching in residence halls by racial background. Student activism on-campus, in the form of marches, sit-ins, teach-ins and social media campaigns, has shown promise in changing the structural and interpersonal manifestations of racism on-campus (Broadhurst & Martin, 2014). However, Students of Color and White students are still experiencing the college campus environment in markedly different ways.

A White hegemonic society supports racism when the dominant group gains the power to systemically deprive another group from similar advantages. On a college campus, this quite simply means the ability to attain an education without the daily fear of facing racialized aggressions. This fear is developed through racist events perpetuated by students and largely ignored by the White majority. Additionally, many advantages that White students receive also include a sense of safety, consistent exposure to perceived inclusive language, and a campus ecology that places an emphasis on White-centered "nonverbal" messages. These nonverbal messages include interactions between faculty and students, the perceptions of campus environments, and the physical interactions between students and the infrastructure of their university (Cabrera, Watson, & Franklin, 2016).

Structural racism has manifested in higher education policy at federal, state, and institutional levels. Because it is so engrained in our society, structural racism has become normalized on our college campuses. One may be able to dissect their own campus culture by learning about the names of the buildings in which they work, examine the racial make-up of the top administrators on their campus, discuss who is invited to the important decision-making conversations and, if these include People of Color, whether they are the same individuals each time. One can examine their own hiring practices (Hughes, 2015). A simple walk around campus may indicate an outward appearance of tolerance, acceptance, and celebration of diversity, but a more in-depth structural view may tell a different story.

Racism on campus is under-reported. Although acts of racial harassment and discrimination are reported and tracked, there is concern that the everyday incidents of racism go unreported. By digging a little deeper into some of the research on racial incidents on college campuses, one could easily delineate that "such statistics cover only the most overt and

aggressive forms of racism and discrimination on campus, leaving out many subtle or less aggressive daily experiences" (Chesler et al., 2005, p. 49). This phenomenon of non-reporting incidents of racism is supported by research that suggests that approximately one in four survey respondents (students) perceived considerable racial conflict on their campuses (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Given the everyday nature and prevalence of racism on campus, it is not surprising that White students were most satisfied with the social environments, and they erroneously assumed their Black, Latino, and Native American peers experienced the institutions this same way (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

Call to challenge the dominant ideology. Between faculty, staff, administrators, and students alike, there is a general call for all parties to recognize their sphere of influence and make true, calculated moves to enact change on their college campuses. As Harper (2013) pointed out, "White stakeholders (students, faculty, trustees, alumni, etc.) have established cultural norms that have governed these campuses for decades" (p. 188). Furthermore, Chang (2007) situates higher education within the greater societal worldview by stating "higher education's capacity to address this significant and enduring national problem [of racism] has been constrained in ways that at times make those institutions and the individuals who attend them part of the problem rather than the solution" (p. 25). This call to responsibility includes: understanding the greater picture, addressing the issue, providing space for meaningful interactions, and a specific call for student affairs professionals to become more knowledgeable about themselves and the issues through their graduate programs and own personal work.

Few researchers have spoken to the role that student affairs professionals play on the college campus, particularly when it comes to responding to issues of racism (Harper & Patton, 2007; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Wood, 2014). The oversight of the work of student affairs

professionals has been a main focal point of my research as I delve into the ways in which student affairs professionals handle these types of situations, how they continue to support their students even when personally affected by the incidents, and how they stay in the field when so many may feel the need to give up their career due to unsupportive environments.

Interrogating Whiteness in anti-racist work. A question posed in this review was centered on the role and purpose of White hegemony, privilege, and allies in an anti-racist movement. In order to challenge the dominant White ideology in our society, it is necessary to explore what it means to hold power and privilege due to skin color. Essed (2013) offered that although "consistently challenging injustices" may be difficult, "anti-racism is a form of leadership" (p. 1395). If individuals are to commit their life's work to social justice, diversity, and anti-racism, then they must be able to take on the responsibilities of what that means as White individuals on a college campus. Identifying, exploring, and interrogating one's identities and motives for participation are integral to doing this sort of work and making a difference for the lives of others.

The relational nature of racism is not only conceptualized as the damage it inflicts on People of Color, but also the affirmation, advantage, and power it conveys to White people (Levine-Rasky, 2016). Power is exercised on campus through cultural ideology embedded in the language, cultural practices designed by Whites, their traditions, and perceptions of knowledge (Gusa, 2010). When a campus allows its (tacit) endorsement of White privilege and inherent power to go unchallenged, "they allow institutional policies and practices to be seen as unproblematic or inevitable and thereby perpetuate hostile racial climates" (Gusa, 2010, p. 465).

Racism exists and is supported in our society by the structural relationship and cohabitation that Whiteness has with power. Critical Whiteness studies argue that the role of

arrogance (in the form of resentment and confidence) coupled with fear (of reprobation and loss of status) along with the emotive companions of guilt and shame lead many White people towards ignorance of another race (Levine-Rasky, 2016). The epistemology of ignorance, therefore, "shields Whites from knowledge of their participation in racism" and allows Whites to "erect formidable obstacle[s] to building empathy for racialized groups" (p. 162).

In higher education, this epistemology of ignorance means not challenging White students to think about their own privilege in real concrete ways. White students should be offered courses centered on racial identity development, encouraged to attend cultural events, and build social justice alliances through centers supported by student affairs professionals (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Ideally, when racism occurs on-campus, White students will be just as outraged as their Peers of Color and will participate in the activism for change. This can only occur, however, when the White students understand enough about their own identity development and its relationship to others to develop the empathy necessary to step out of their privileged zone. The same argument can and should be made for student affairs professionals. These individuals should be attending the same types of professional development opportunities focusing on diversity and anti-racist work, engaging in diversity-centered conversations on campus, and participating widely in studies of their own institutions' structural make-up (Harper & Patton, 2007). If student affairs professionals are to challenge and support their own students' development around anti-racist work, then they must have done some of their own in the past and seek out ways to continue their work in their everyday lives. This includes interrogating Whiteness and racism beyond the awareness of privilege.

Racism Should Be Seen, Not Aberrant but Part of the "Normal"

The third CRT tenet challenges scholars, learners, and practitioners to recognize and name racism as an everyday "normal" occurrence in society. Consistently, the use of the word "minimization" frequently appears in the literature. Authors overwhelmingly stated that incidents of racial aggression were minimized on college campuses and therefore the literature reflected such minimization. In the context of his literature review, Harper (2012) stated that "only 16 of the 255 articles used [for this report] used either word ["racism" and "racist"] three or more times" (p. 20). Furthermore, Harper (2012) concluded that "few authors" actually "engaged racism as a plausible explanation for racial differences or negative experiences reported by minoritized participants" (p. 20). This notion that racism is no longer a central factor affecting minorities (Harper, 2012) is a result of how racism manifests now in ways that are often not overt discrimination (Park, 2011).

Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi (2001) examined this phenomenon in a study regarding how sociologists limit racism and its significance. By conducting a qualitative analysis of sociological tools and methods, Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi determined that "by failing to grasp racism as [a] structural phenomenon . . . it is regarded . . . as a phenomenon that does not affect the social body and its institutions" (p. 118). Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi (2001) concluded that the methods by which sociologists study the racial phenomenon in fact create myths about the range of racism and its impact.

In essence, these researchers miss how racism affects minorities today. Instead, the findings distort the significance of racial stratification. Furthermore, the act of minimizing a racist act or "sweeping it under the rug" comes from a place of power and privilege that further diminishes the students' experiences. If the university were to pretend that racist acts, covert or

overt, did not occur, or minimize them to the point of extinction, then it should not come as a surprise that Students, Faculty, and Staff of Color identify the campus climate as "chilly" (Park, 2011). If the university were to attract quality students, staff, and faculty to the campus community, then it must be a true community where the dignity of all is supported. Discussing these acts, regardless of size or scope, while creating an environment where racism cannot thrive contributes to this process.

Draw From Experiential Knowledge

One of the strategies associated with utilizing CRT in studying higher education is the notion of storytelling and using one's personal experiences to mold the tenure of the research. These stories are considered counternarratives because they "seek voices from those who can speak firsthand about ways in which they have been oppressed by race-based insults, prejudicial disadvantage, and discriminatory acts" (Harper et al., 2011, p. 184). Counternarrative storytelling draws directly from the experiential knowledge of those being marginalized by a racist society. The voices of Students of Color (Feagin, 1992; Feagin & Sikes, 1995; Feagin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Lett & Wright, 2003), Faculty of Color (Jacobson, 2012; W. A. Smith, 2004) and Student Affairs Professionals of Color (Garcia, 2016; Karkouti, 2015; Kolowich, 2016) are paramount in crafting this research.

Many researchers today are utilizing the counternarrative method to understand the ways in which racism impact the college experience (Parker, 2003; Parker & Lynn, 2002; W. A. Smith et al., 2007). Others use qualitative research methods within a CRT framework to understand specific populations like White male students (Cabrera, 2014a; Marcus et al., 2003), Black male athletes (Beamon, 2014), or White students' perceptions of race (Picca & Feagin, 2007).

By centering this study through the lens of CRT, the voices of those whose experiences are being studied (i.e., the student affairs professional) become the focal point rather than anecdotal evidence presented by the researcher. It simply assumes that one is going to the source of the experiences and recognizing not only those stories that are needed for the entire study to make sense, but that are also valid pieces of evidence to help create knowledge on the topic.

Encourage Interdisciplinarity

CRT encourages an examination of race from multiple perspectives and disciplines. The purpose of this section is to discuss what specific populations have already been written about as a way to delineate between the needs and experiences of student affairs professionals and those that have already been showcased. Four "groups" showed up consistently in the research: White students, Black students, allies, and faculty. I investigated the research on each group, and critique the findings in this section. Studies examined in this section come from researchers in the field of sociology, race/ethnic studies, and anthropology, human development, women and genders studies, as well as higher education. This demonstrates the need for interdisciplinarity in research because the topic of racism should be viewed through multiple lenses. Because individuals experience, that is, witness, engage in or are exposed to, racism from their multiple social lenses, the study of this topic should mirror this process. Additionally, looking at racism from these various angles provides a more thorough and cohesive picture of the problems plaguing our campuses.

It must be noted here that it is quite telling that the largest amount of research found on this topic focused on White students (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000; Cabrera, 2014a, 2014b; Lawrence & Bunche, 1996; Picca & Feagin, 2007; Tatum, 1994). It is my assumption that this is due in large part to the influx of Whiteness studies in the academy in the new millennium as well

as the added interest in focusing anti-racism work on the White majority. Black students were a focus in many citations (Bullock & Houston, 1987; Dei, 1997; Edwards, 1970; Feagin et al., 1996; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Harper et al., 2011; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Sedlacek, 1987), while allies (Broido, 2000; Case, 2012; Edwards, 2006; Kivel, 2011) and faculty (Jayakumar et al., 2009; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1992; Scheurich & Young, 2002; Wolfe, 2013) were the subject in other studies. Vast volumes on the topic of diversity exist without many specific studies of populations, experiences of racism, or studies merging the topic of student affairs professionals and racism (Seltzer & Johnson, 2009; Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2014). In the subsequent sections, I discuss the findings from my cross-disciplinary investigation into the literature on racism on campus based on studies of three major participant groups: White students, Students of Color, and faculty.

White college students. Whiteness studies, as previously defined, aim to situate 'being White' within the greater context of power and control in society. If research is to look at racism through the lens of Whiteness studies, particularly studying White college students, then perhaps inroads can be made to understand and impact the inter-student racist acts that occur. Counternarratives are critical in studying this topic; its aim is to decenter Whiteness and to provide an avenue for the exploration of People of Color's experiences. Equally important is to study White individuals on-campus to understand where their sense of power comes from and how it is perpetuated. Overall themes of these studies include perceptions of racism, the pervasiveness of their involvement in on-campus racism, and the changing nature of White perceptions of racism from a generational perspective. The following studies were exemplars on these points and were often cited by subsequent researchers.

Racial joking. Cabrera (2014a) completed a study of White male college students and their perceptions on racial joking. By interviewing 43 students, Cabrera (2014a) was able to glean that racial joking occurs regularly among this particular group of individuals. It also appeared that joking in the absence of minority persons would often be framed as nonracist. When pushed on the topic of relevance and why these individuals felt as though these jokes were acceptable, many of the participants stated that it was because minorities are "overly sensitive" (p. 8). Cabrera (2014a) admits that "the theme of racial joking was an unexpected component of these interviews, but emerged as the most common example of racism the participants identified" (p. 9).

What made this particular research study interesting was the casualness of the conversations around racial joking. This speaks to the greater societal structure in place that permits and perpetuates this type of behavior. For example, having been a White male in college, I distinctly remember many instances of racial joking occurring in the absence of minority people. I also recall feeling uncomfortable, but not being in a position to "do anything" about it out of fear of retribution or being cast out of the group.

"Frontstage" and "backstage" metaphor. Picca and Feagin's (2007) collected journal entries of over 600 White college students and conducted a detailed analysis of their themes. From those themes, the researchers developed the "frontstage" and "backstage" metaphor to explain how students viewed racism while in the presence of minority peers ("frontstage"), and how those perceptions changed when only in the company of White peers, family at home, and friends ("backstage"). Findings of this study included the idea that White students do not give much consideration to what People of Color think about this racial world; they do not tend to see,

or attempt to see, society from others' perspectives; they describe a society where racial events happen frequently and yet they continue to take their White privilege for granted.

This study, to a certain extent, is critical from a White student's perspective as it sheds light on the "realness" of racism on a college campus and its many forms. Students in their journals spoke candidly about the pervasiveness of racism as well as their own thoughts and feelings on how they should act when confronted with People of Color.

This study also speaks directly to the theme of the White involvement in racism on campus. As a White researcher, and White student affairs professional, I have had a plethora of experiences in my career where I have seen colleagues performing the similar "frontstage" and "backstage" racism metaphor. Many of those experiences have been exacerbated by the anonymity of social media, as will be discussed later.

White racial ideologies. A second study on White college students (both men and women) mapped their racial ideologies by utilizing a mixed-methods approach (Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000). A survey was completed by 732 students and, of those students, a random sample was selected for in-depth interviews. Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) discovered that White students "exhibited more prejudiced views in the interview than in their survey responses" (pp. 75–76). Secondly, the researchers found that the White students "used a variety of semantic moves to save face" (p. 76). This "side-stepping" technique offers that students understand the hurt caused by racism on college campuses, but because of their own racial privilege they do not have to deal with it on a daily basis and therefore do not have to think about it regularly. This technique also allows students to save their personal and public views of themselves as non-racists, creating an intersection between preserving the notion of White innocence while publically condemning the hurt caused by the racist acts.

Finally, Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) conclude that "the students' defense of White supremacy is no longer based on the parameters of Jim Crow racism but is instead based on a new racial ideology" (p. 77). By utilizing responses that would point towards victim blaming, color-blindness, or open contentment, Bonilla-Silva and Forman (2000) shed light on the fact that we do not live in a post-racial society but, in fact, one that consistently finds new ways to "conceive Blacks as the 'other'" (p. 78). It is also worth noting that students in 2000 were "Generation X" kids who felt a certain indifference about diversity and racism. Today's college student, commonly known as "Millennials" have been fashioned slightly differently due to world experiences, technology, and the shrinking scope of the global economy. Many in the media see Millennials as being more accepting and inclusive of people than previous generations (Notter, 2002).

Students of Color. There are many studies about Students of Color and their experiences with racism on campus (Bullock & Houston, 1987; Dei, 1997; Edwards, 1970; Feagin et al., 1996; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2001; Harper et al., 2011; Rankin & Reason, 2005). There were first-hand accounts of Students of Color experiencing racism (Bullock & Houston, 1987; Feagin, 1992; Seltzer & Johnson, 2009) as well as anthologies on studying diversity on campus (Chesler, et al., 2005; Sedlacek, 1987). However, the majority were focused research studies looking at the experiences of Students of Color and how racism directly impacted or impeded their achievement of a college education.

***Comparing experiences of White students and students of Color*.** Rankin and Reason (2005) took a large-scale quantitative approach to looking at the perceptions of campus climate from the perspectives of White students and Students of Color. Their large-scale study sampled 7,347 students across ten campuses in the USA. The survey was developed by one of the authors

(Rankin, 1994) but updated with questions regarding gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender climate studies (Rankin, 1998). By running statistical analysis using the chi-square method of comparison, the researchers found that Students of Color experienced more hostile campus climates due to their race than their White counterparts. White women, on the other hand, shared that the campus climate was more difficult for them to navigate due to gender inequalities. Students of Color experienced more racially charged events and, quite surprisingly, both groups recognized such events at roughly the same percentage.

Coupling this with Picca and Feagin (2007), one can see that students are recognizing when an event or incident occurs and how it may be racially charged; however, White privilege offers them the opportunity not to have to *experience* it as would a Student of Color. One question to consider involves intersecting identities if this were to be compared with Harper et al. (2011) is: would the results remain the same for "high-profile" (e.g., student body president) or "highly involved" (e.g., resident advisor) students regardless of their racial identity? Or would there be some form of discrepancy if the student were more or less well-known on-campus? Would a student athlete (if identified as a Student of Color), for example, experience the racial climate of campus the same way that a non-student athlete Student of Color would? Or, would there be differences based on the student's perceived "status"? Having worked at two different colleges where the student body president was a Student of Color, I have witnessed the grey area of navigation that these student leaders have undertaken. On the one hand, these student leaders had direct access to the *power* of the institution and had high-profile experiences in front of their fellow students. However, student affairs professionals at the student leader's schools noted that due to skin color and the underlying racism that permeates their college campuses these particular student leaders faced undue scrutiny and surveillance from peers and administrators.

Black male student leadership. Black male undergraduate students who take on leadership roles within predominantly White institutions report that they experience undue scrutiny and internalized pressure to perform. This holds probably for Black female student leaders as well, but the particular research referenced focused on males only. Harper et al. (2011) studied the experience of the Black male resident assistant at predominantly White universities. This study consisted of focus group interviews with 52 students across six universities identified as predominantly White. The young men interviewed in the study all expressed incidents of racial microaggressions (e.g., racial slurs being directed at them, questions about their ability to handle their role and responsibilities) in the context of doing their job. Furthermore, the young men displayed feelings of "onlyness" particularly if having to work for a supervisor who identified as White. The systemic nature of racism, resulting in a relative absence of Black leadership in student affairs, is as much to blame for the problem as the acts perpetuated by particular individuals in the academy. As demonstrated by this particular piece, Black male college students in a resident assistant role are working directly for a student affairs professional. While there is a general call for more purposeful engagement opportunities for the type of highly involved student in his study, this task would ultimately fall to the student affairs professional to implement.

Faculty. The faculty experience of racism within the academy has received more attention in recent years (Jayakumar et al., 2009; Pope-Davis & Ottavi, 1992; Scheurich & Young, 2002; Wolfe, 2013). Existing studies show that many Faculty of color are more likely than their White counterparts to receive negative evaluations (Hamermesh & Parker, 2005; Vargas, 2002). At the same time, Padilla (1994) finds that "many Faculty of Color experience periods of cultural taxation, or what we call racial taxation . . . where they might be consistently

bombarded with requests to serve the institution through participation on committees, organization of events, and so on" (p. 66). However, this civil service to the university is often not acknowledged in their evaluation. Jayakumar et al. (2009) found that Faculty of Color experience difficult working environments within the academy and the faculty equated that with poor campus racial climates. The same could be true for student affairs professionals; their persistence rate is greatly impacted by the difficulty in working in these types of environments. There were no determining variables in the study (Jayakumar et al., 2009) that would identify the type of institution, whether liberal arts colleges as opposed to large research institutions or historically Black colleges and universities and predominantly White institutions.

Wolfe (2013) looked at Faculty of Color persistence at predominantly White institutions and discovered some rather interesting findings. Utilizing a qualitative phenomenological approach to inquiry, as well as situating it through the lens of CRT's element known as counter-storytelling (Wolfe, 2013), the author found that to persist on a predominantly White campus, Faculty Members of Color utilize different strategies than their White counterparts. To maintain professionalism, they consciously manage their "brand" of instruction and research, deconstruct race relations within the institution, and master university politics. Finally, the Faculty of Color spoke candidly about the need to maintain personal values as well as sustain support networks.

Both studies (Jayakumar et al., 2009; Wolfe, 2013) approached the idea of persistence from the lens of campus climate and culture. While the strategies for findings differed greatly, the storytelling of Wolfe's (2013) work was particularly interesting because the faculty member's voice rang clear through their narrative. As one Faculty Member of Color stated in her narrative, "they don't expect you to challenge authority and the decision making. If you do, then

one of the things they do is exclude you from the meeting. That sends another message. If you talk too loud you won't be invited back" (Wolfe, 2013).

Commitment to Social Justice

The final tenet of CRT is demonstrating a commitment to social justice. Committing to social justice through coalition or personal growth is a pillar for student affairs professionals. At every national conference for the field, there are a plethora of sessions devoted to social justice work. Attendees are often asked to participate by sharing best practices from their campus, or engage in dialogue around the hot topics plaguing their universities. Social justice allies were prevalent in the literature for this review (Broido, 2000; Case, 2012; Edwards, 2006; Kivel, 2011), and much of the themes derived were around engaging White students in the process of creating positive racial change on campus.

Student affairs professionals, by and large, consider themselves to be inclusive individuals when working with a diverse study body. It has been my experience with White colleagues that many of them utilize the word "allies" when referring to the work that they do with their students. However, Museus et al. (2015) purport that "many advocates of racial equity on college and university campuses are ill-equipped with tools and evidence to help them navigate institutional environments with a focus on cultivating optimal institutions for racial equity" (p. 75). This contrast shines light on the fact that while many student affairs professionals would label themselves "ally" and desire to work towards the common good of racial equality, many colleges and universities are simply not equipped to support the individual to perform that sort of work. This lack of support is a central theme throughout the dissertation as it is a question brought to the research in the hopes of discovering what it is exactly that student

affairs professionals *need* to *feel* as if they are supported within a difficult environment and when facing difficult racialized circumstances.

Frameworks for social justice and diversity in higher education. Researchers since the 1970s have been grappling with the topic of institutional racism in higher education. Due to the vastness of the topic, various frameworks have been developed and explored.

The campus climate for diversity framework. One framework centers on the idea of *campus climate*. By insisting that the campus racial climate is a part of the overall institutional environment, the *campus climate for diversity framework* (Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Allen, & Milem, 1998; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999), suggests that campuses can address their institutions' legacy for exclusion, can increase its structural diversity, cultivate more positive interactions among differing groups of individuals, and enhance one's perception of the campus racial climate (Museus et al., 2015). This framework, perhaps the most overarching and broad, takes into account the ways in which external forces (i.e., governmental policies) can influence the overall racial climate on campus. This particular framework also dives deeply into the historical context of the institution which, for many, may include deep-rooted ties to racism, colonialism, and even slavery.

The campus climate framework is strong in that it states that addressing diversity cannot simply mean admitting more Students of Color to predominantly White institutions, but truly looking at the structural nuances (i.e., curriculum, pedagogy, Faculty of Color) that make up the campus climate. A challenge to this framework is in its breadth. Very few individuals on the college campus have the time or resources needed to complete a full-scale assessment of their campus climate.

The culturally engaging campus environments (CECE) model. The CECE model (Museus, 2014) spells out nine elements of the campus environment that must be considered by the institution to contribute to a person's sense of belonging and acceptance. The nine elements are divided into cultural relevance and cultural responsiveness subheadings. These indicators are meant to focus on the ways in which the campus learning environment is intertwined with cultural backgrounds of the individuals, and how the support systems in place engage and respond to the norms and needs of a diverse student body.

This particular framework encourages institutions to look into ways to engage cultural communities and diverse perspectives when developing policy, enhancing the curricula, or engaging alumni in equity practices. This model is predicated on the notion that a racially inclusive environment is necessary to transform the lives of the individuals who work and study within the walls of the institution. Indicators developed in this model include cultural familiarity, culturally relevant knowledge, cultural community service, opportunities for meaningful cross-cultural engagement, collectivist cultural orientations, culturally validating environments, humanized educational environments, proactive philosophies, and availability of holistic support (Museus, 2014).

These nine indicators are strong due to their focused attention on the lives of the individuals who make up the college campus atmosphere. One particular challenge to this model is the complexity of the indicators and the wide range of variables that could influence outcomes. According to Museus (2014), the complexity of this model might be more useful if researchers "magnify the focal points of the model to highlight key variables and relationships on which future research should focus" (p. 218).

The institutional diversity framework. This particular framework is a recent addition to the literature (D. G. Smith, 2015) and outlines the specific aspects of the academic curriculum needing to be embraced by the campus community and the ways in which the global and local contexts influence the campus culture. By linking five dimensions (the mission statement, the institution's viability and vitality, education and scholarship, intergroup relations, and access and success), the goal of this framework is to engage leaders on ways to imbed diversity, inclusion, and equity throughout the campus (Museus et al., 2015).

Being a newer framework, one of the challenges to this particular framework is that few scholars have been able to apply it to study the organizational processes of institutions around diversification. However, if utilized along with the aforementioned CECE model, this framework could examine the extent to which college campuses "have embedded indicators of culturally engaging environments throughout various aspects of their organizations" (Museus et al., 2015, p. 35).

The Equity Scorecard. The final framework in the review is an action-research framework geared towards assisting institutions in understanding how to achieve more equitable outcomes (Bensimon & Malcom, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Harris & Bensimon, 2007). The action-research process challenges faculty and staff researchers to create a "scorecard" based on the following components: numerical data associated with student outcomes, an inquiry process geared towards understanding the intricate structures of the institution, a process of problem solving for key leaders, a theory of change that illuminates the ways in which the campus is failing certain populations, a bottom-up approach to the academic leadership, and the development of a culture of equity-mindedness (Museus et al., 2015). Unlike the other aforementioned frameworks, the Equity Scorecard focuses on the ability of the practitioner to be

a catalyst for change on their campus. This framework relies on the change agents on campus to understand the history of their institution and devote much time and resource to crafting and implementing policy to support affective change.

All of the aforementioned frameworks strive to create cultural and structural change on the college campus. While they each take varying pathways to assisting this change, each one looks deeply at the structures already in place based on the history of the institution and its ability (or inability) to change. Different than earlier studies, I will focus solely on student affairs professionals' experiences rather than on the campus as the object of research. Many of the objectives sought in these frameworks will apply to the student affairs professionals' experience; however, differences will be present as staff often do not have the same support structures in-place (tenure, sabbatical opportunities for research, grants and funding) that students do (opportunities to co-research), and certainly not the same support that tenured faculty receive.

Role modeling identity development in student affairs. Maintaining a commitment to social justice requires a willingness to interrogate one's own place within the academy. Because of this need, Patton et al. (2007) stated that "higher education and student affairs professionals should be knowledgeable about and aware of how their own racial identities influence their decisions and interactions with others" (p. 47). Furthermore, it is also essential that student affairs professionals, whether White or Persons of Color, have a well-developed sense of their own racial identity (Reason et al., 2005). A White student affairs professional, according to Reason et al. (2005) "must continue to reflect on their own Whiteness, their motivations for the racial justice actions they take, and the power and privilege that influence their lives" (p. 62).

This is a key notion to furthering the field within this topic, particularly as a White student affairs professional is charged with the same amount of responsibility to addressing these

topics as their Colleagues of Color are. Understanding that Professionals of Color will most likely feel a greater sense of connectedness to their students, it is not the onus of Persons of Color to be the main proponents of racial equality on a college campus. It certainly is not responsible behavior when White professionals run away from the issues simply because it is deemed "too difficult."

Patton et al. (2007) advised that,

> higher education and student affairs professionals be knowledgeable about and aware of their own racial identities, honestly evaluate themselves in terms of their understanding of race and racism, and recognize how their knowledge, awareness, and racial identity influence their decisions, policies, and interactions with students from diverse backgrounds. (p. 49)

This work requires "the stamina to sit with discomfort, to continuously seek critical consciousness, and to engage in difficult dialogues" (Watt, 2007, p. 115). To address some of this work, particularly when faced with difficult circumstances, student affairs professionals have a duty to lead the discussions on their college campus while simultaneously building bridges and coalitions with faculty who have an influential voice (Watt, 2007).

Student affairs professionals spend their days working with the students they serve and collaborating with colleagues from across the academy on developing programming and services to best meet the needs of those evolving students. An incident of overt or covert racism can derail those plans and impact the student affairs professional greatly. Pain and emotions are involved of those exposed, the situation is highly sensitive, often turns the campus into crisis mode, and student affairs professionals often do not feel sufficiently supported in taking action. When it comes time to deal with or face those negative incidents, or support students who are dealing with them, having a greater sense of self-awareness will aid the student affairs

professional in not only completing their duties as an employee, but also be able to exercise the self-care needed to persist.

Concluding Thoughts on the Literature Review

Just as it has been shared throughout this chapter that racism is alive and well on our college campuses, work needs to be done internally to understand and fully encapsulate the racial injustices our institutions reinforce. But, as stated, the sheer naming of the issue (racism) is a newer concept on the college campus. Addressing it appropriately and involving the right individuals to ensure the safety of our students, continues to be a challenge. However, racial incidents happen regularly in overt and covert ways.

While writing this chapter, I myself witnessed three distinct acts of overt racism towards other employees and students at the institution. One incident involved the placement of a sign with the "n-word"[3] stuck to the door of a housekeepers' office in a residence hall. The campus is predominantly White while the housekeeper who uses that office is a Woman of Color. The Office of Equal Opportunity and the university police were quick to investigate the matter, but no culprit was found. In response they held a forum to discuss the incident and distributed an educational pamphlet to students in the community where it occurred.

The second incident involved racially charged language shared over a social media platform aimed at a historically Black student organization on-campus. University officials did condemn the action, while some students expressed anger that this type of behavior was

[3] True to the form of counternarratives, quotes presented in this dissertation are in the exact language participants used in the interviews. However, in the several cases they used the full wording of the term, I edited participants' language to the "n-word" out of principle.

occurring and voiced their displeasure. But the vast population of the student body remained silent.

The third incident involved the student body president, a Black male, sitting for the pledge of allegiance at the onset of a student government meeting. His peaceful protest, while lauded by many, also drew the ire of many students who took to social media platforms to challenge his protest. Comments unanimously centered on, or implied, his race rather than the cause for which he was supporting (in this case, police brutality towards African Americans in the United States). Would a White student body president sitting during the pledge of allegiance garner the same type of hatred and vitriol? Or, would the cause have been seen as more of the central focal point? In the case of this specific dissertation research, how does the racism thrust towards that student impact the student affairs professional (in this case the student government advisor) who happens to be a White identifying individual? Has it made an impact on that person? Would it be the same impact had that individual also been Black?

These three examples illustrate the relevance of much of the literature discussed in this chapter. Incidents happen on a regular basis because they are supported by the systemic nature of racism in higher education. Furthermore, these three incidents all indicate the specific isolation that members of the community feel when they are the targets of these acts. The voices and experiences of students, faculty, and student affairs professionals, are needed to fully expose the issues and challenge the dominant ideology. Racism is part of our everyday "normal" in higher education.

In the world of student affairs and higher education, a field in which many people base their work in anti-racist practice, racism can not only be studied by looking at our daily micro aggressions or the major incidents that rock our campus, but by studying the sheer fact that the

system of higher education is built on White principles, White norms, and structures meant to advance a White agenda. Without a clear and unadulterated look at this reality, our field will continue to be reactive to racial incidents rather than equipped to enact real change.

Through an intentional analysis of what the field is facing and where we have been, one may be able to understand the starting point for a discussion on the ways in which racism is impacting student affairs professionals. Racism exists on-campus and ignoring the fact is having a negative impact on those whose career it is to support students. The effects of racism undoubtedly trickle into the personal and professional lives of those individuals. By naming the issue and having deep dialogue with colleagues, it is my intention to provide a call for action so that student affairs professionals will be able to better the lives of the students we serve and also live better amongst and for one another.

Chapter III: Methodology and Study Design

This research study is focused on understanding the lived experiences of student affairs professionals related to the ways in which institutional racism in the academy impacts their lives and their work. By digging deeper into the topic and raising issues previously hidden within the academy, this research explored nuances and provided a voice for those who have been impacted by incidents of racism. The research is intended to ultimately open up lines of communication for how student affairs professionals can be more effective in supporting one another, provide necessary services and outlets, and retain professionals in the field of student affairs. The aim of this chapter is to describe how the research questions led to the chosen methodology, discuss the study design's theoretical framework, and clearly state the study procedures.

The Foundations of the Research Design

The theoretical foundation for the proposed research emanated from the worldview and philosophy that social reality is constructed through lived experiences. With a focus on lived experiences, it is natural to assume an interpretivist/constructivist approach. Creswell (2003) noted that the constructivist approach "tends to rely on the participants' views of the situation being studied" (p. 8). The interpretivist/constructivist epistemology suggests that, "reality is socially constructed" (Mertens, 2005, p. 12), and that the researcher is directly studying the views of the participants. Because the topic of racism on campus and its impact on student affairs professionals is not typically discussed or extensively researched, this study fills in those gaps by melding together both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis in a mixed methods study.

This research was guided by the notion that there is a need for studying the impact of racial hierarchies on student affairs professionals. The voices of these professionals come from

diverse backgrounds and lived experiences. Each participant had a different perspective on the ways in which racism has (or has not) affected their work and lives on-campus. There was an intentional focus on individuals who have witnessed or been impacted by racism.

Methodology

The methodology for this study was mixed methods. Creswell (2015) defined mixed methods as follows:

> An approach to research in the social, behavioral, and health sciences in which the investigator gathers both quantitative (closed-ended) and qualitative (open-ended) data, integrates the two, and then draws interpretations based on the combined strengths of both sets of data to understand research problems. (p. 2)

This methodological approach was a good fit for the study as it gave me an opportunity to hear participant voice via in-depth qualitative interviews and focus groups, and it supplements these stories with quantitative data that showed the breadth and scope of student affairs professionals' experience with the everyday nature of racism in the academy. The qualitative data, conversely, showed the depth and nuances. Maxwell and Loomis (2003) discussed five components to weigh when designing a mixed methods study: the study's purpose, conceptual framework, research questions, methods, and validity considerations. All of these components were considered and discussed when designing this research study.

Qualitative research. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) stated that the "goal of mixed methods research is not to replace either of these approaches but rather to draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies" (p. 14). Qualitative research takes place in an open system because it offers participants the opportunity to interact with the environment and the researcher while engaging in deep reflection on a given topic. Qualitative interviewing techniques give the researcher the option to follow a storyline through to completion and ensures that the voice of those student affairs professionals that had

previously been held voiceless, are heard. According to McMillan and Wergin (2010), qualitative research focuses "on conducting studies in natural settings using mostly verbal descriptions, resulting in stories and case studies rather than statistical reports" (p. 4). Methods for collecting qualitative data include "interviews, text analysis, surveys, participant observation, even statistics" (Rudestam & Newton, 2007, p. 36). In this research, interviews and focus groups were utilized in the qualitative phase of the study.

Narrative inquiry. The qualitative work in my study reflected elements of narrative inquiry in the form of storytelling. Connelly and Clandinin (2006) stated that a

> Story . . . is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. Narrative inquiry, the study of experience as story, then, is first and foremost a way of thinking about experience. (p. 479)

This particular method of inquiry permitted me as the researcher to walk alongside the story of the participants and co-construct an overall picture of how racism on a campus is experienced by student affairs professionals. As Clandinin (2006) described, this methodology and its importance in research design, "these lived and told stories . . . are ways we create meaning in our lives as well as ways we enlist each other's help in building our lives and communities" (p. 44).

Benefits of using qualitative methodology for this study. Qualitative methods offered me the opportunity to focus intently on the experience of student affairs professionals with racism on the academic campus. By speaking directly to student affairs professionals a story began to emerge that described their lived experiences related to racism on-campus and the overall impact to their professional and personal lives. By utilizing two methods within the qualitative phases (interviews and focus groups) I was able to explore in depth personal experiences, and also stimulate a group conversation about the impact these racist events have had on my participants.

Individual interviews allowed participants to open up about their experiences in a one-on-one setting. Focus group interviewing allowed participants to build off of each other's story and reflect on their common and unique experiences.

Quantitative research. Quantitative research is broader in its reach, and, according to McMillan and Wergin (2010), "uses numerical calculations to summarize, describe, and explore relationships among traits" (p. 4). Quantitative research, as opposed to qualitative, operates in a less open system whereby there are fewer interactions with the external environment.

Benefits of using quantitative methodology for this study. This study's aim was to look at the breadth and depth of the issue of racism and its impact on student affairs professionals. To achieve a sense of the breadth and scope of the issue, quantitative sampling was needed. This was conducted through the use of a survey that was developed based on the themes gleaned through the qualitative interviews and focus group. It is important when dealing with a topic such as racism, to reach a critical number of participants to fully encapsulate how common (or uncommon) these issues may be for student affairs professionals. According to Rudestam and Newton (2007) "statistical methods are especially useful for looking at relationships and patterns and expressing these patterns with numbers" (p. 27). The relationships explored in this research centered on the rate of incidents of racism, the pervasiveness of the everyday nature of racism on-campus, and methods of support that student affairs professionals receive. Quantitative methods also offered a sense of anonymity in reporting. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, it may be easier for participants to reflect on their experiences through an anonymous survey without feeling that their identities may be exposed or that they would face retribution for their participation.

Using mixed methods for this research study. Completing a mixed methods study provided breadth and depth to the topic of racism's impact on student affairs professionals in both open and closed systems. Depth developed in the conversations amongst individual interview participants and focus group participants. I was able to truly *hear* and gain a clearer view of the impact that racism had on these fellow student affairs professionals. By utilizing data from the qualitative interviews to inform development of the quantitative survey, and distributing the survey to student affairs professionals across the country, I was able to ascertain how broadly themes gleaned from the interview and focus group narrative were generalized to the broader population of student affairs professionals.

The quantitative survey questions provided breadth by showing in numerical fashion, the rate of occurrence of the experience with racism. Gathering data from participants across the country, as well as different types of institutions, allowed me the opportunity to see how far reaching the experience with racism is in our field. A mixed methods study allowed me to compare quantitative data with the participants' stories and the range and pervasiveness of these types of events.

Finally, a focus group's interpretation of the data assisted in explaining and validating the quantitative portion of the study. To fully encapsulate and address the research questions posed, the reflections of the focus group participants rounded out the study.

Social justice framework of the study. Due to reliance on counternarrative storytelling, a component of CRT, and, given the sensitive nature of the topic of racism, this research project was situated within a social justice framework. Creswell (2015) states:

> Social justice designs are those in which the researcher includes a social justice framework that surrounds the . . . exploratory design. This framework flows into the mixed methods study at different points, but it becomes a constant focus of the study aimed at improving the lives of individuals in our society today. (p. 7)

Creswell (2015) continued that, “the social justice design . . . may be a transformative or advocacy framework that surrounds the project in order to advance the needs of a marginalized group” (p. 8).

Research Questions

The research questions were developed to fully understand the impact of racism on student affairs professionals. Questions were initially developed after reviewing literature on the topic, through conversations with trusted colleagues in the field, and finally vetted through a faculty member who has studied and researched the topic of racism from a sociological lens.

The overarching research question was, how do incidents of racism on campus impact student affairs professionals? Further research questions were as follows:

- How do student affairs professionals describe their experiences with racism on their campuses?
- What are the responsibilities that student affairs professionals bear when confronted with racism on campus?
- What are the needs of student affairs professionals in those situations, and how do student affairs professionals best prepare to be present to their students in those situations?
- In what kinds of ways can student affairs professionals voice their support of the student experience and speak out against the racism on campus?
- What impedes a student affairs professional from supporting their students and one another when incidents occur?
- At what rate are student affairs professionals experiencing incidents of racism on their college campus?

The Research Design

When designing a research study, it is important to allow the research questions drive and inform the decision on the appropriate methodology. A mixed methods design was chosen based on information collected during the literature review, examinations of the gap in the research, and an exploration of the anticipated breadth and depth of the topic. A qualitative approach to this topic was needed to honor and analyze the depth of the stories and experiences being expressed. Due to the nature of the field of student affairs and how spread out across the country participants potentially were, an online survey was the most efficient way to capture data that demonstrated the breadth of experience with racism on academic campuses. This online survey methodology also gave participants the opportunity to participate anonymously on this potentially sensitive topic.

Sequential research design. The mixed methods approach allowed the researcher to design a study with several data collection points. In the sequential research design, one phase of data collection informs the next. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) stated that, "with partially mixed methods, both the quantitative and qualitative elements are conducted either concurrently or sequentially in their entirety before being mixed at the data interpretation stage" (p. 267). This study was a mixed methods sequential design because the stories of the participants were individual to the participant, the qualitative data shed light on the depth of the issue at-hand which then informed the design of the survey, and the online survey addressed issues related to the breadth of experiences across the country. Creswell (2015) defined exploratory sequential design as "first explor[ing] a problem with qualitative methods because the questions may not be known . . . [then] the researcher uses the qualitative findings to *build* a second quantitative phase of the project" (p. 6). This exploratory sequential design required multiple phases beginning with

individual interviews, synthesis of data, presentation of data to a smaller focus group that helped develop the themes that were used to write the quantitative instrument (survey), and presented the survey data analysis to the focus group for thoughts and feedback. The sequencing of data collection included semistructured interviews, a focus group, a survey, and a final focus group. This study design is in three parts: a large qualitative study with a quantitative data set to support and demonstrate the breadth of findings and a final smaller qualitative section designed for validation. In the language of mixed methods this was a QUAL→QUAN(qual)→qual study design. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) stated that "to be considered a mixed-method design, the findings must be mixed or integrated at some point (e.g., a qualitative phase might be conducted to inform a quantitative phase, sequentially)" (p. 20). Furthermore, Creswell (2015) defined the term by stating that it "is the place in the mixed methods research process where the quantitative and the qualitative processes intersect" (p. 82). Full integration, in this particular study, took place during the final stages of the research design when the focus group reflected on and shared feedback on the quantitative results.

Phase 1: Individual interviews. The first phase of the research design was qualitative consisting of semistructured interviews with participants, recordings, and transcriptions completed, and data analyzed. Interviews were completed with 12 participants. Prior to conducting the interviews, the researcher contacted via email likely participants to explain the research study, to describe why they were being identified as potential participants, and to give them an opportunity to sign a consent form. Upon agreeing to the terms of the interview, the researcher and participant decided on an agreed upon meeting method and time to conduct the first interview. Field notes were taken to record location and setting, body language of the participant, length of pauses, and overall observations of the interactions between myself and the

participant. Recordings of the interviews were made and transcribed. Narrative analysis was conducted from the transcriptions and interviewer field notes.

Phase 1 participant selection. Trust is a key component between researcher and participant, and to gain trust around this type of topic, the initial participants were known to the researcher. Because the research design was exploratory, the sample consisted of a small number of individuals intentionally selected to help explore the problem. To achieve a diverse range of individuals for the initial interviews, a pool of five potential participants was identified. These participants represented a broad range of institution types as well as identified gender expression and race. It was a goal of this dissertation to not only understand the depth of issue at-hand, but to also properly represent multiple angles and perspectives to the problem. This was done by reaching a diverse pool of volunteers. Additionally, at the end of each interview I asked the participant if they could assist the project by recommending another colleague whom they believed would be a willing volunteer and I commenced outreach from there.

Potential participants were contacted and invited via email (Appendix A). Another email was forwarded from the initial participants on my behalf to colleagues whom they believed would be willing participants in the study. This process allowed potential participants the opportunity to not respond or reject the invitation without intervention from the researcher. This email for potential participants, again, is the text shown in Appendix A.

Phase 1 data collection techniques. Some potential participants were interviewed face-to-face while others were interviewed by phone or via Skype. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission and notes taken by the researcher. Field notes recorded any physical responses to questions, pauses and reactions by the participant, and any interactions I had as the researcher with the participant. I also provided overall reflections after

each interview to share initial reactions and thoughts on ways in which my own identities interacted with the participant and their stories.

The interview guide in Table 3.1 was designed to start the participant down the path of recalling specific events that they witnessed or were impacted by in their work. A semistructured interviewing format allowed me as the researcher to probe deeper into topics or memories that were of interest to the research study. The role of researcher in this phase was to allow the story to take on a life of its own while simultaneously guiding the conversation towards an end result of understanding the answers to the research questions. If a participant was particularly moved by an experience that they were sharing with me, then it was my responsibility to look for ways to support the person through the retelling of the story but being cognizant of the emotional toll it may take. I have learned over the course of my career how to utilize silence to support a person as well as recognize triggering events and when to pause a conversation. The emotional moments were there for some, and hopefully, my relationship with the participant gave them the feeling that they were being supported through the reenactment of the events.

An interview guide was developed to help frame this particular portion of the research project. Table 3.1 shows the subjects covered and the questions that stimulated the conversation in this phase of the study.

Table 3.1

Interview Guide Used in This Study

Subject	Question(s)
Student affairs background	• How did you get into Student Affairs? What is your role today within the field?
Personal experience with racism on your campus	• Have you ever personally experienced racism while working on a college campus? • What types of conversations were held with colleagues or as an institution? • Describe for me the first incident of racism you directly experienced on the college campus where you were working. What role did you play in response to the incident?
Other incidents	• Since the experience you described, have there been other acts of racism on-campus? If yes, how would you describe what happened in these and how you, the student affairs office, and the institution responded to them.
Institutional response	• What has your opinion been of the institution's response to racism on-campus? Has the institution responded effectively or ineffectively in your opinion?
Student affairs response	• What type of work has been done within your Student Affairs division to support employees who are working with students amidst racism on-campus? • What level of comfort do you feel Student Affairs professionals have in discussing racism on-campus? • What types of conversations have you had with colleagues when reflecting on these incidents?
What more needs to be done?	• By the institution? • By colleagues in Student Affairs? • By graduate preparatory programs? • What systems are at play on a college campus that allows incidents like what you've described to permeate so easily? • What role do you feel Student Affairs professionals play in being a part of the solution? • What types of questions do you feel need to be asked of our colleagues in the field to fully understand and encapsulate the topic?

An act of racism can intertwine with personal life and interfere with the professional expectations of these individuals. How is a student affairs professional able to separate their own experience from that of the students they are supporting? How does a student affairs professional balance the support needed by the student with their own reaction to the events that transpire? While my initial line of questions posed to my participants were based on their own personal experiences on campus, and in their roles and how they were impacted by them, it was inevitable that the topic of student support would surface. When that topic arose it was pertinent for me to be able to parse through the muddy layers of personal impact and professional obligation.

This research study and the topic at-hand was understandably challenging. Racism is not an active topic of conversation among strangers on the street and is even difficult in situations in which you are interacting with individuals you know and with whom you have a close relationship. Because of the challenges, seen and unseen, anticipated and unanticipated, it was imperative for me to be present to the participants, and give them the opportunity to tell their stories.

Counternarrative storytelling brings to the forefront the experiences of marginalized persons. In this research, counternarrative storytelling highlights the stories of student affairs professionals relative to how racism is dealt with in their work. The counternarratives in this research study sought to counter the ways in which the dominant (typically White, male) stories have been told. Since the stories of the ways in which racism impacts student affairs professionals have not been told, these counternarratives centered on sharing those stories from individuals who have been directly impacted by those very acts of racism. This was not meant to presuppose that all of the stories would come from individuals with subordinate identities; rather the data were collected from all individuals who have experienced racism and have had it impact

their work in the field. The counter stories ran against the sheer storylines that "racism does not happen on college campuses" and "racism does not impact the staff who work on college campuses." Those have been the very decrees shared by the collective silence on the topic.

Phase 1 analysis of data. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then offered to each participant for review. Once approved by the participants, the transcripts were then coded and themes derived by identifying key words and phrases. Field notes were also considered in the analysis to provide a holistic picture of the participants' story. I was careful to document my own immediate reflections while also staying connected to my participants. These field notes included pauses for reflection, physical emotions not recorded or heard, and even interactions that I may have as researcher to the participant. Notes were reflected on to consider how my own biases or worldviews were interpreting the stories being shared. Based on the themes gleaned from the transcripts with the interviewees, an additional qualitative portion was conducted with a small focus group of four participants.

Phase 2: Focus group interview. Individual interviews provided me the opportunity to build from each person's story and represent their experiences. Taking those data to a smaller focus group helped hone in on the particular problem as it related to the research question and facilitated survey development and distribution. According to Frey and Fontana (1991), "this technique [focus group interviewing] is not meant to replace the individual interview, but rather group interviewing provides data on group interaction, on realities defined in a group context, and on interpretations of events that reflect group input" (p. 175). Adding this layer of qualitative data, built from the individual interviews, gave the group the opportunity to explore the issue from a broader societal context.

Phase 2 participant selection. The participants of the focus group were selected from the individual interviews that occurred in the first stage of the design. Participants were asked to volunteer for the focus group if they wished to be a part of the continuing conversation and were interested in assisting with the design of the survey questions. Once again, diversity of participants was paramount to the research to effectively study the topic from a holistic and diverse perspective. An email was sent to initial participants to gauge their interest in participating in the focus group phase (Appendix B).

I co-facilitated the focus group with a trusted colleague in the field. This co-facilitator came from the initial interview participant list and was an African American woman. This process afforded me as the principle researcher to focus intently on the stories and reflections being shared and not focus too much on the process. As the co-facilitator of the focus group interviews, it was my responsibility to enter into the conversation with a baseline knowledge of the topic based on the previous data gathered, and have a sense of direction for guiding the conversation. In an exploratory design, focus groups are led by unstructured, open-ended questions to give the participants the opportunity to explore the topic freely. Three of the four focus group members were local and able to meet in-person at an agreed upon location. One participant was remote and set to join the conversation virtually by way of Skype. However, the morning of the focus group, this participant was ill and had to recuse themselves from participating. The focus group was recorded similarly to the individual qualitative interviews.

Phase 2 focus group analysis. The goal of the first round of focus group interviews was twofold: first to discuss and analyze the themes gleaned and prepared from the individual interviews, and secondly, to assist in the preparation of the quantitative survey that was distributed widely in the field. I asked the focus group participants what types of questions they

would like to see in the survey, and how that could aid in the understanding of the topic from a broad perspective. I then took their feedback and suggested topical questions and developed the survey for distribution.

The focus group participants' data were transcribed and sent to participants for member checking. Member checking included seeking participant verification that the transcript reflected the group conversation and the opportunity to make any necessary corrections. I then conducted thematic analysis on the focus group data and used this information to further inform the development of a survey. To best describe the ways in which the qualitative data informed the survey construction, a chart was created which tied the themes with the survey items. Creswell (2015) states that

> in an exploratory sequential design, one of the challenges is how to use the qualitative data for building new measures or instruments . . . the researcher could present the exploratory qualitative findings in the first column, the measures or variables derived from the qualitative findings in the second column, and how the measures and variables formed new scales or instruments in the final column (p. 85).

Phase 3: Survey. The survey was designed and constructed based on the data collected from the first and second phases of the research project. The procedures for this phase included: survey design, survey distribution and collection, and data analysis using statistical methods and narrative analysis. The survey was designed using SurveyMonkey. The survey was tested for readability, flow, and clarity by student affairs professional colleagues and for specific content by subject matter experts. The survey format was as follows:

I. Statement of Purpose to describe the survey and overall research questions and address instructions and IRB information.

II. Question establishing the respondent eligibility for participation, including student affairs professional status.

III. Specific statements, or items, related to the experiences described in the literature and discussed by the interviewees and focus group participants. These were focused on issues related to: professional and personal response to racism, how incidents were handled, and questions asking participants to think about experiences they had had dealing with racism on their campus as well as its impact on their professional and personal life.

IV. Questions based on qualitative feedback analysis

   a. Questions focused on the primary themes that emerged from the analysis of the qualitative interviews and focus group narrative. These themes included: Education, Empathy, Fear, Proactive Measures, Response, Support, and Whiteness.

   b. These statements had 5-point response options ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

V. Demographic Questions to gather data on participants

   a. Gender? (Female, Male, Non-binary/third gender, Prefer to self-describe, Prefer not to say)

   b. Race/ethnicity (Black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American or American Indian, Hispanic or Latino/a, White/European, Other)

   c. Institution type by Carnegie Classification (Doctoral/Research, Master's, Baccalaureate, Associate's, Two-Year, Four-Year)

   d. Institution type by description (Private/Non-Profit, Private/For-Profit, Public, Community College, Historically Black College/University, Predominantly White Institution, Hispanic-Serving Institution, Tribal College, Other)

e. Years working in Student Affairs (0–2, 3–10, 11–20, >20)

f. Current role in Student Affairs (Vice President/Executive level, Dean/Assistant Vice President level, Director, Assistant Director/Mid-level, Entry-level/new professional, Graduate assistant)

VI. A final statement thanking participants for filling out the survey

Phase 3 participant selection. Participants for the survey portion of the study came from other colleges and universities who have student affairs divisions. By definition, student affairs professionals hold positions in the university setting that are outside of the academic divisions. Student affairs professionals (sometimes also referred to as student services professionals), work at institutions of higher education in the capacity of supporting students' personal growth, and development. Position titles range broadly given the context of the institution and size of the student affairs division. Part of the demographic questions asked included years of experience, current institution type and size, as well as functional area (i.e., residence life, multicultural affairs, disability services, etc.)

Participants were solicited through various social media outlets that cater to the student affairs professionals. I also asked the participants of the individual interviews to take the survey as well as provide access to colleagues in their home institutions who were willing to participate.

Phase 3 data collection. The survey was administered through the SurveyMonkey web-based survey tool. Questions developed included Likert scale responses as well as filtering questions for the appropriate demographic questions. The objective of the survey was to draw parallels between student affairs professionals' experiences, the impact of, and the support, or lack thereof that they had received when dealing with racism on their campus.

Finally, the survey asked questions related to what types of interventions they had experienced at their campus. This included what type of supportive environment they worked in, what type of feedback and support they received from upper administration, and how free they felt they were to speak out on their campus when incidents occurred. Coupled with these questions were basic questions regarding their institution types (e.g., large public research institutions, small private liberal arts; racial composition of student/faculty/SAP body), as well as experience in the field.

Phase 3 analysis of data. The purpose of administering a quantitative survey for this study was to gain an understanding of the breadth of the issue and to compare with the depth of the qualitative data gleaned. The data collected from the survey was analyzed with the aid of SPSS®. Descriptive analysis, including mean scores, standard deviations, and percentage distributions were run for all closed-end survey questions. Some Chi-Square tests and t-tests were relevant, and are included in Chapter IV.

Phase 3 preparation for Phase 4. The final stage of integration included crafting the quantitative data into a format to follow-up with the qualitative participants during the second focus group. From these two initial data sets a major takeaway to discuss was what participants have had to say "looks" like an ideal model of support for student affairs professionals in the work place as it pertains to dealing with racism. These initial themes for a supportive model were described in full for the final stage of the research process.

Phase 4: Focus group. In order to fully encapsulate, validate, and understand the issues surrounding racism and its impact on student affairs professionals, a final focus group was held. The steps in preparation for this last phase included: compiling survey data and initial themes for distribution, designing initial questions to prompt conversation, scheduling the focus group with

participants, facilitating the focus group, collecting data, transcribing, and analyzing data for final write-up.

Phase 4 participant selection. At the end of the second phase of the study the first focus group participants were asked to continue participating in the study once the survey distribution and analysis concluded. Utilizing the same four participants from the first focus group gave the research validity since the same sets of opinions and experiences that drove the survey design were now reflected in the results.

Phase 4 data collection techniques. Data from the quantitative survey was shared along with initial ideas for creating a supportive model for student affairs professionals. While a full model had not yet been developed at this point, themes that could lend itself to a model were shared for feedback. I asked for feedback from the participants based on their initial reaction to the quantitative data and asked them to reflect on the overall themes presented in a visual model of racism and support for opposing it for student affairs professionals. Finally, a discussion occurred in which the focus group participants were asked about feasibility of this type of supportive model. Did they feel as though this is the right path for student affairs divisions across the country? Would their own division support this type of work? What other types of barriers did they feel would be present in taking on this type of initiative (e.g., human resource restrictions, policies against social media usage)? This final focus group was recorded and transcribed using the same techniques as in Phase 2. Transcripts were sent to focus group participants to check for accuracy and revisions.

Phase 4 integrated analysis of data. The research was driven, once again, by the narratives presented by the focus group participants but supported by the quantitative data. Additionally, the responses given by the focus group participants in this final phase were driven

by their responses to the data derived in the quantitative phase. This process is called triangulation, and, according to Greene, Caracelli, and Graham (1989) "triangulation refers to the designed use of multiple methods, with offsetting or counteracting biases, in investigations of the same phenomenon in order to strengthen the validity of inquiry results" (p. 256). Coding was accomplished by identifying key words and themes, looking for group consensus on survey findings and an overall "picture" of a model of support for fellow student affairs professionals.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to this research study based on the structure and methodology, the role of the participants, as well as the social identities of the researcher.

Structure and methodology. There were advantages and disadvantages to conducting a mixed methods research design. Advantages included the ability to gather both breadth and depth data, gathering and analyzing the stories being shared in the qualitative phase, and reaching a large number of colleagues in the quantitative phase. Another advantage was the ability to sequence the study, building from each previous study phase. Limitations to this type of research design included the length of time needed to complete the study, scheduling challenges with participants, and the survey response rate.

Role of the participants. Studying racism's impact on student affairs professionals may be perceived as a sensitive topic. The fear of retaliation or lack of trust with the researcher may have caused participants to intentionally leave out important aspects of their experiences. Furthermore, a participant may not have wished to open up about a story to a researcher if they did not perceive there to be any personal gains. Furthermore, relying heavily on initial participants known to the researcher created a lack of generalizability.

Social identities of the researcher. As a straight, cisgender, White male studying racism, I approached the topic from multiple dominant identities. Stories and experiences shared with me were not necessarily similar to the experiences I have had in my life or my career. As with any sort of conversation, when discussing a topic with another individual, particularly one eliciting strong emotions, it can be easy to ignore the richness of the data being shared because you are too busy thinking about and reflecting on your own comparative experiences. It was apropos of me as the researcher to take copious field notes of my own thinking and reactions to the stories I was being told to check my own biases. I was present in the research, not only as a student affairs professional, but also as a researcher with a particular positionality.

Chapter IV: Research Findings and Implications

The aim of this chapter is to describe the findings and results from the data collection process. The chapter is structured using the following sections: mediating influences on the study, profiles of the participants from the qualitative interviews and focus groups, survey participant demographics, and data analyses related to the research questions.

The research questions addressed throughout this study centered on the lived experiences of student affairs professionals. The overarching research question was, how do incidents of racism on campus impact student affairs professionals? The secondary research questions were as follows:

- How do student affairs professionals describe their experiences with racism on their campuses?
- What are the responsibilities that student affairs professionals bear when confronted with incidents of racism on campus?
- What are the needs of student affairs professionals in those situations, and how do student affairs professionals best prepare to be present to their students in those situations?
- In what kinds of ways can student affairs professionals voice their support of the student experience and speak out against the racism on campus? What impedes a student affairs professional from supporting their students and one another when incidents occur?
- At what rate are student affairs professionals experiencing incidents of racism on their college campus?

To address these research questions, I designed a four-phase study. Data were summarized after each phase of the study. In true mixed methods form, data from one phase served as a catalyst for the next phase, with each phase building from an earlier phase to create an overall picture and address the aforementioned research questions. In this study initial research questions drove the construction of the methodology. Those questions helped shape and develop the line of questioning for the qualitative interviews. Once those interviews were completed, coded and analyzed, the data were presented to the focus group participants for review. The reflections of the focus group participants prompted the development of the survey questions. Frequencies and data analyses were completed and shared back with the focus group for one final reflection. This consistent data checking sequence served the purpose of integrating and embedding each layer of data into the study. This layering ultimately led to the final hypothetical model presented in the next chapter as a way to describe the overall phenomenon and offer a pathway to change.

Phase 1 consisted of qualitative interviews from which seven main themes and various subthemes were developed. An initial 627 codes were derived from the interview transcripts before a second read-through in an effort to combine and group codes. From the initial 627 codes, seven main themes emerged, each having subthemes connected to them. A total of 45 main and subthemes, as listed below, were developed, documented, and sent to the focus group for reflection:

- education (access to education for all, at the expense of Persons of Color, cultural competency certificates, educating one another, graduate program content, individual reflecting, student affairs taking the lead, and systemic issue examination);

- empathy (compassion for one another, lack of true conversation, and reflection on the issue of racism);
- fear (code-switching, elitism, job security, not having the right language, and shaming others);
- proactive measures (hiring diverse professionals, policies that are inclusive, and reflection on state of student affairs);
- response (divide between academic and student affairs, drag feet and are slow to respond to incidents, money drives institutions, universities are reactionary, reputation at stake, and student affairs take lead on responding);
- support (of activism, of dissenting voice, of free speech, lack of, of SA pros, of students, creating a safe space, and self-care); and
- Whiteness (assumptions made of Persons of Color, microaggressions, numbers of diverse populations on-campus, White privilege, and White dominance).

Detailed analysis from Phase 1 narrative data is included in the discussion related to specific research questions.

Phase 2 was a focus group interview in which four of the already interviewed participants reflected and dialogued on the main themes derived from the interviews. Those themes, along with general inquiries developed by focus group participants, directly assisted in the construction of quantitative survey questions. These themes were reflected on and discussed by the focus group participants in Phase 2. In an effort to fully maximize the mixed methods design of this study, this focus group ended the interview discussing questions that they would like to see in the quantitative survey. This integration was important to the study as the quantitative findings, once analyzed, were brought back to the same focus group participants from Phase 2 in the final phase

of the study. Table 4.1 maps thematic elements from the focus group discussion to survey question development.

Table 4.1

Development of Survey Questions from Qualitative Data

Focus Group Discussion	Qualitative Interview Theme	Qualitative Interview Subtheme	Survey Question
Where are our colleagues getting their support from?	Support	Of SA pros; creating safe spaces; self-care	Q6. When *personally* faced with racism on-campus, where do you typically turn for support? (check all that apply)
What do you think people would feel comfortable doing when faced with racism on-campus?	Fear; Support	Language; job security; of activism	Q14. When acts of racism happen on-campus, would you typically intervene by: (Please respond to at least the first four items)
What are the expectations Persons of Color have of their White counterparts in those moments?	Support; Empathy	Of SA pros; compassion	Q15. For Participants of Color only: when acts of racism happen on-campus, would you want your White counterparts to do:
How big is this problem really? Or are we making assumptions?	Response	Reputation of the university	Q2. Using the scale below, overall how pervasive is racism on the college campus in which you currently work? (0–100) Q5. During the past academic year, how many times have you *personally* experienced the following types of racism? Q9. During the past academic year, how many times have you been *aware of*, someone has told you about, or you have observed these types of racism? Q10. During the past academic year, how many times have you acted as either an *ally* or *support person* for someone experiencing racism?

Note. “SA pros” means “student affairs professionals.”

Detailed analysis from Phase 2 focus group data is included in the discussion related to specific research questions.

Phase 3 was a quantitative survey distributed to student affairs professionals across the country. Survey data was analyzed and detailed in the discussion findings below. Following survey data analysis, the findings were summarized and presented back to the Phase 4 focus group to share thoughts and reflections on the overall topic, and to discuss "now what" to do with the findings and implications for this research study.

Mediating Influences

Two national incidents occurred during the data collection portion of this dissertation study that clearly impacted participants as well as their reflections on the questions asked of them. These two incidents had a tremendous ripple effect throughout the community of student affairs professionals and the reverberations were observed throughout all four phases of this study. Had these two incidents not occurred or had this dissertation study occurred at a different time of our national dialogue, elements of the data collected may have been different. The overall themes likely would be the same, as racism has been prevalent throughout the history of higher education, however, the *temperature* of this topic has undoubtedly been raised by these two incidents.

In November 2016, the United States elected Donald Trump as President. Mr. Trump's rhetoric and policies were immediately felt across college campuses throughout the country. His "Muslim ban," lack of support of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or "DACA" students, repeal of Obama-era gun restrictions, and his inability to condemn White nationalists, were common themes throughout this data collection process. Every single interviewee and focus group participant mentioned President Trump by name and pointed to his support of, what he had

referred to as “very fine people” in the White nationalist movement, as making life more difficult for People of Color on college campuses. Every participant pointed to examples of problematic on-campus student behaviors, a rise in overt racist incidents, and internal struggles with supporting all students on their campus while simultaneously having to consider their own personal safety and mental health. Understanding that college campuses are supposed to promote intellectual curiosity and personal development, to some the college campus now *felt*, as many participants stated, as a new frontier for racial wars and intimidation. These overarching points directly influenced the construction of several survey questions, including the pervasiveness of racism on participants’ campuses, the role of support and ally-ship, and existing needs student affairs professionals want to see addressed when faced with racism on-campus.

On August 11–12, 2017, during the early to mid-weekend, a “Unite the Right” rally occurred in Charlottesville, Virginia, home to the prestigious University of Virginia (UVA). This event highlighted White nationalists marching with torches through the campus of UVA chanting racially charged phrases and rallying around the protest of a planned removal of the statute of confederate soldier, Robert E. Lee. What started out as an already despicable display of White supremacy and racism escalated into a deadly confrontation when a car driven by a White supremacists slammed into a crowd of counter-protestors, killing a woman named Heather Heyer. Much of the protesting occurred in or around the campus grounds of UVA while students were preparing to begin their fall semester. The fallout in the town, and nationally, had a tremendous impact on student affairs professionals who had to return to work the following Monday and begin picking up the pieces with, and for, their students and one another.

One participant in the qualitative interview portion of this study was impacted directly by these events due to his working proximity to the incident. Eddie, who identifies as an African

American male student affairs professional, was scheduled to speak with me two weeks after the event. Our interview continued as scheduled. However, the incidents in Charlottesville had a palatable existence in our conversation. Most of the qualitative interviews were conducted in September and October of 2017. Although the participants did not have a direct connection to anyone involved in the protest or rally, almost all mentioned it, as well as the prevailing and subsequent challenges of dealing with first amendment rights on-campus as well as supporting the conservative voice. All participants, at one point during the interview, also mentioned the election that had taken place the previous November, its lasting impact on college campuses, and possible connections between Charlottesville and Washington D.C.

These two events certainly had a direct impact on the data collected during this study. Many survey participants stated that dealing with racial incidents on-campus was the most difficult aspect of their jobs. One participant, identifying as a White female dean, stated that she could more easily deal with a sexual assault or an incident of physical violence on her campus, but incidents of racism were on another level of difficulty. Participants of Color who were interviewed in this study described “racial battle fatigue”, and one Participant of Color in the quantitative survey stated that they had been in the field almost 30 years and the problems of racism were only getting worse. Understanding the depth and breadth of the problem of racism on campus, and its impact on student affairs professionals, was a precipitating factor in this study’s overall design. It is quite evident from these two aforementioned mediating influences that racism is alive and well, and, in some places thriving; it feels like the call to action and discussion about how we support one another and our students has never been needed more than it has now.

Description of Participants

This section describes the participants of the qualitative interviews, focus groups, and survey participants. Included are statements on how participants describe their social identities and their positions within student affairs at their college or university. Language with which they described their institution has been kept in their voice rather than following typical Carnegie Classification monikers. This distinction is made to ensure the sanctity of how each participant views their institution and to protect their identity. All names are pseudonyms chosen by the participants. Survey participant demographics are presented in a table format including gender, racial identities, years working in the field of student affairs, region of the country, and their current role.

Interview participants. Twelve qualitative interviews were conducted for Phase 1 of the study. The first five participants were known to the researcher and were emailed regarding their potential participation in the study. Participants signed informed consents and scheduled either a phone or Skype interview. All interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were prefaced with the overall purpose of the study. Participants were given the option to end the conversation at any point or given the opportunity to skip questions. No participant opted out of the study. After the first five interviews, each participant was asked whether they were willing to send information regarding the study to two or three colleagues in the field. From that outreach, seven more participants were included. This section covers short descriptions of each of the 12 participants in the order of their interview to help situate the reader within the context of the responses that the participants provided.

Eddie. Eddie is as an African American male working at a large public university in the South. He works at a dean's level position with direct student contact and support on a daily

basis. As the only "Dean of Color" in his unit, he is often "assigned" to Students of Color who are in need of services. Eddie, who has been in the field around 8 years and started in this most recent position in the last two years, spoke about the challenges his campus was now facing in the aftermath of the protests and death. He stated that, "racial tensions were already high because it's a school in the south, but now [because of what happened in Charlottesville in August] it's more palatable than ever."

Lee. Lee is a White male doctoral student in student affairs at a prestigious academic program in the rural Midwest. As a social justice educator and rising scholar in the field, his main concerns stem from the inability of higher education to study Whiteness and White dominance as a culprit for the racism on campus. He hopes to be able to reach more White men and bridge more racial divides through his ability to challenge those that "look like him." Lee "does not believe he is ever able to be impacted by racism directly" since he holds many dominant identities, however, being in a committed inter-racial personal relationship, his acute awareness of his racial privilege and how he and his partner are treated on a regular basis, is always at the forefront of his mind.

Serena. Serena is an Asian-American woman working in student affairs and completing her doctoral dissertation. A true champion of social justice and social justice education, she has been deeply impacted by racism with her work in the field of student affairs. Her "racial battle fatigue" has caused her to not only leave positions in the past, but has also taken a toll on her mental and physical health. Serena consistently raised the issue throughout her interview of the needs to look at racism as not just a Black and White "thing" but to recognize the various racial and ethnic backgrounds that make-up our communities. She was deeply affected by our

conversation and interview stating it had brought up many previous experiences that she had tried to suppress.

Christina. Christina is a White woman who most recently left the field of student affairs due, in large part, to the ways in which her role was detrimental to Students of Color on campus. She had been working in a first generation college student program on a large public Midwestern campus until the "tokenization" of her students and administration's "inability to look past how 'good' the program made their campus look" caused her ultimately to give up her position. She spoke about feeling like a "poser" who could not adequately support her students given her White racial identity when almost all of them were not only African American or Black students, but also from a lower socioeconomic status. While trying to utilize her White privilege to enact change for her students, Christina faced much backlash from the campus community and ultimately left her position to begin working in the private sector.

Brit. Brit is an African American woman working at a private college in the South where over 90% of the students are White. She spoke about her experiences of being called a "n-word"[4] by White male students on her campus, as well as waiting for emails to come out from administration condemning such actions. Brit has studied many of the educational "systems" in-place from kindergarten through collegiate years and feels as though much of the problems associated with racism on a college campus are related to the institution's interest in maintaining the "status quo."

Riley. Riley is an African American man with a doctorate degree in the field, working at a director level position in a diversity center at a religiously-affiliated, private university in the

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[4] As stated previously, even though my participant used the full word in the interview and on transcript, I have chosen to edit the word out out of principle.

Midwest. He described his own undergraduate experiences as being an activist and "agitator" on his campus while remaining very cognizant of his status as a male, a director, and Man of Color. Very focused on the student experience and being a person "behind-the-scenes" in his work, he is also supporting his staff members in their own racial development on campus. He spoke about student activism in this day-and-age and how he supported and wanted to be physically present, but understands that his positional authority often excludes him from participating. Being a racial justice ally, combined with his own research interests in masculinity, Riley is a proponent of looking at racism from an intersectional perspective, particularly around gender implications.

Denise. Denise is an African American woman. She is a dean's level staff member in a diversity center at a university in the Midwest. A PhD level expert on issues of race and gender, Denise shared multiple negative racial experiences that were aimed at her and her students during her over 20 years of tenure. Her persistence has come from financial need as well as a vision for the future where difficult dialogues can result in positive change for the university and the world. She is optimistic about their recently hired university President as he has challenged the White majority to think about race and racial tensions differently. Denise also expressed how deeply the interview impacted her and we had multiple follow-up conversations regarding the challenges of a White man writing on racism and the patriarchy that accompanies such work. She shared that the nurturing and "mothering" position that many Women of Color find themselves in on a college campus can be taxing and that the intersectionality of race and gender can be extremely challenging in dominant settings.

Fay. Fay is a White woman and dean of students at a predominantly White religiously affiliated university in the Midwest. She stated during the interview that this topic is by far the most challenging part of her job and that she does not envy her dean colleagues who have to

work to support students through these experiences. Fay has seen the ways in which racial incidents on campus have affected the student experience, but also the negative ways in which it has impacted Colleagues of Color in particular. Also present in the conversation was her positional authority as it relates to upper administrator's role at the university. Being seen as a "face" of administration to students, and having a close connection with the President's office, places her in a position of power. However, that power only goes so far when it comes to dealing with the overall systems in-place that perpetuate racism on campus. Her position, she feels, cannot enact "real change" on the campus, it can only be used to "clean up the mess" that others, primarily faculty members, put on her plate or have caused.

Tamara. Tamara is a Caribbean-born woman working now as a faculty member at a Historically Black College. She began her career in student affairs in a diversity center before recently moving over to a faculty post. Tamara has experienced racism, as have her students, even on her current campus where there are very few White students. She spoke of the phenomenon by positing that discrimination even occurs within Communities of Color. She experiences racism as prevalent in this country regardless of institution type or location. Although there are more latitudes to having difficult conversations on her campus due to the nature of the student make-up, she stated that the "powers that be" are very image conscious and want to ensure that donors continue to flood their campus in an effort to support growth and promote the ideals of historically Black colleges and universities.

Omar. Omar is a newer professional to the field and is an African American man. His university is located in the South and is predominantly White. His interactions are almost exclusively with White students, however, the few Students of Color that the university has all gravitate towards him for support. He describes his work as often "exhausting" because of the

supportive measures he has to put in-place for his students, but shared that if he "did not do it" then "who will?"

Jane. Jane is a White woman working in a mid-level position at a large state school in the South. Her university is very prestigious and is often in the news due to its collective sports accomplishments; accomplishments, she says, that are almost always "on the backs" of the Student-Athletes of Color. Her career path has seen many ups and downs with students in crisis situations and she often tries to assist Students of Color even knowing that it is likely there is a lack of trust there because of her White identity.

Rob. Rob, the final Phase 1 professional I interviewed, is a White man working in a director level position at a large flagship institution in the Midwest. His role happens to be very similar to my own so our conversation was very much a dialogue about the challenges we face being White men, in positions of power and influence, while also attempting to work towards racial justice. Rob shared his experiences of being called a "poser" and being accused of having ulterior motives for the work he was trying to do. One of the most striking stories he told was when he participated in a staff demonstration wearing a "Black Lives Matter" shirt and the hours of conversation that he had with students afterwards. The intersection of multiple dominant identities and positional authority is something he thinks of often, but wants to continue the work he does in an effort to better his campus culture.

Five additional participants were contacted and invited to participate but did not complete interviews. Responses ranged from no response to the request to expressing lack of time or energy for the discussion.

Focus group participants. After the initial themes and subthemes were developed, a call for participants for a focus group was sent out to individuals who had been interviewed in Phase

1. In a strategic move for focus group balance, the initial email invite was sent to four (4) of the 12 interviewees, representing various racial and gender identities. It was also important for the researcher to be able to conduct the focus group in a way in which technology would not be inhibiting. All four participants agreed and three of them were able to meet in-person. Due to an illness the day of the focus group, one participant had to pull out and was not able to Skype into the interview. The three remaining participants from the 12 interview participant pool included an African American woman, an African American man, and a White man. I added myself as the fourth participant in a dual role as a White participant researcher.

Participants received in advance a list of the themes as well as some general thoughts and feedback to reflect on prior to the focus group discussion. The purpose of the focus group was also shared via email as well as a preface to the focus group questions. The initial flow of questions was discussed with one of the participants ahead of time as she and I had worked together as a co-facilitation team for various focus groups in the past. Because all members of the focus group had already previously participated by being interviewed in the first phase, much of the content was familiar to them.

Survey group participants. Drawing from the individual interviews and focus group themes gathered in Phase 1 and Phase 2, a 24-question survey was constructed in an effort to garner the scope of the experiences that had been identified across the field of student affairs. The survey was designed and administered through Survey Monkey with quantitative analysis completed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

To recruit participants for the survey, messages were posted in various social media sites directed at student affairs professionals and individual emails were sent to colleagues in the field. Many colleagues were eager to share their feedback and promised to forward the survey to

student affairs professional units on their campuses. The survey remained open for three weeks and netted responses from 188 participants that worked in the field of student affairs. Of the 188 responses, 17 respondents only answered a few questions, leaving 171 completed surveys. Out of the 171 completed surveys, 30 did not provide responses to the demographic questions. Respondents may have had survey fatigue or they wanted to maintain complete anonymity out of a fear of repercussions for being critical of higher education's dealings with racism. The participant demographic percentage distributions are shown in Table 4.2. Table 4.3 displays career characteristics of years working in this field and professional role therein.

Table 4.2

Descriptive Statistics for Study Respondent Demographics.

Demographic	Description	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	92	65.2
	Male	47	33.3
	Non-binary/third gender	1	0.7
	Prefer to self-describe	1	0.7
	Total	141	100.0
Race/ethnicity[a]	African American/Black	31	22.0
	Asian/Pacific Islander	5	3.5
	Hispanic or Latinx	7	5.0
	Native American/American Indian	0	0
	White/European	89	63.1
	Prefer not to say	1	0.7
	Other (please specify)	0	0
	Total	141	100.0
Region of work	Mid-Atlantic	10	7.0
	Midwest	56	39.8
	Northeast	47	33.3
	Southeast	22	15.6
	Southwest	3	2.1
	West	3	2.1
	Total	141	100.0

[a]Eight participants self-described their race/ethnicity as “biracial,” “multiracial,” “Jewish,” and “Filipino.”

Table 4.3

Descriptive Statistics for Experience in Field of Student Affairs/Student Development/Student Services Work and Current Role

Demographic	Description	Frequency	%
Years working in Student Affairs/ Student Development/ Student Services	0–2	27	19.1
	3–5	38	27.0
	6–10	35	24.8
	11–20	30	21.2
	>20	11	7.8
	Total	141	100.0
Current Role	Vice President/Executive level	2	1.4
	Dean/Assistant Vice President level	3	2.1
	Director	28	20.0
	Assistant Director/Mid-level	49	34.7
	Entry-level/new professional	44	31.2
	Graduate assistant	7	5.0
	Other[a]	8	5.6
	Total	141	100.0

Note. $N = 141$.
[a] Several "other" responses included academic advisors (falling within student affairs) or "administrative support."

The racial demographics for the survey respondents aligned roughly with current demographic information for the student affairs field in general. However, White/European survey participants (63.1%) overrepresented and Hispanic/Latinx survey respondents (5.0%) underrepresented the target population of student affairs professionals. In a recent analysis of member demographics, the formerly named National Association of Student Personnel Administration (NASPA) found that the field of student affairs included White (46%), Black or African American (18%), Hispanic (38%), and Asian (5%) professionals (Parnell, 2016).

Phase 4 focus group participants. Post survey data collection and analysis, the same Phase 2 three-member focus group (plus the researcher) came together to discuss the findings and analysis of the quantitative survey. Initial data was sent to the Phase 2 focus group participants prior to the meeting for their review. During this Phase 4 focus group, participants reflected on the findings. One participant, the African American female, had a last minute emergency and was unable to attend but was willing to share her reflections via email, which were incorporated into findings.

The Phase 4 focus group looked at the survey data question-by-question, the conversation was recorded and transcribed and sent to participants for feedback. These data helped to co-construct the model presented in the Chapter 5 discussion.

Research Question Analysis

The overarching question summarizing this dissertation research was, how do incidents of racism on campus impact student affairs professionals? To effectively address this overall question, a series of secondary questions were developed to build into the inquiry of the study. This section details out each of the secondary questions and utilizes the qualitative and quantitative data to support findings.

How do student affairs professionals describe their experiences with racism on their campuses? This question ultimately prompted the entire study when it was clear from the literature and my own professional experience that incidents of racism were happening on campuses, and the field of student affairs may have often failed to adequately discuss how racism was impacting those around us. The design of the study was aimed at getting to the depth and breadth of how participants described this phenomenon and, ultimately, how they felt it was impacting them.

Personal experience with racism on campus. One survey question, "Have you personally experienced racism directed at you while working in your role as a student affairs professional?" probed the overall impact of racism. Out of 188 total responses to the first survey question, 64 participants (34%) responded "*Yes*" and 124 (65%) respondents stated "*No*." Although the initial reaction to those numbers may seem benign, it should be recalled that 89 (63%) of the 141 respondents identified as *White/European* in terms of race in the demographics portion of the survey. Forty-three (36%) respondents identified as Persons of Color, with 31 *African American/Black*, five *Asian/Pacific Islander*, seven *Hispanic* or *Latinx*. Multiple participants (eight) checked *Other* and identified themselves as biracial or multi-racial. The question of personal experience with racism, broken down by racial demographics, is displayed in Table 4.4. This question was skipped by 8 participants.

Table 4.4

Responses to Question: Have You Personally Experienced Racism?

	Total		White		African American		Other Persons of Color	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	64	34.0	2	2.2	24	77.4	14	70.0
No	124	66.0	87	97.8	7	22.6	6	30.0
Total	188	100.0	89	100.0	31	100.0	20	100.0

Chi-Square was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference across race groups for personal experience with racism. The results showed a significant association between race and whether participants experienced racism, with χ^2 (2) = 81.75, p = .000. African Americans (77.4%) and Other Persons of Color (70.0%) were significantly more likely to experience racism than White (2.2%) survey respondents.

Personal experiences with racism. Survey participants were also asked what types of racism they had personally experienced (Table 4.5). Participants were able to offer multiple responses. These data indicate that the majority of incidents student affairs professionals personally experienced were verbal harassment/discrimination (44.4%) followed by visual representations of racism (31.7%) and, least of all, action-based incidents of racism (23.8%).

Table 4.5

Frequency Distribution for Types of Racism Personally Experienced On-Campus

Type of Racism	N	%
Verbal harassment/discrimination (language aimed at putting someone down due to race)	28	44.4
Visual representation of racism/prejudice (i.e., signage, graffiti, etc. . . .)	20	31.7
Action-based racism (i.e., campus protests or demonstrations, physical altercations, etc. . . .)	15	23.8
Total	63	100.0

Survey respondents were also asked to reflect on the rate at which these types of incidents had occurred to them directly (Table 4.6). Almost half (46.8%) of those that had personal experience with racism on campus indicated that they experienced verbal harassment/discrimination one to three times. About one-third of survey respondents indicated that they had experienced visual representation of racism (34.7%), action-based racism (30.4%), and other discriminatory acts/microaggressions (38.6%) from one to three times.[5]

[5] The distinction between the three categories of experiences of racism expresses common-sense thinking for the purpose of the survey rather than conceptual or theoretical precision. Verbal harassment is also an "action" and so is posting or painting a demeaning visual representation. Demonstrations often include both verbal and visual racist statements.

Table 4.6

Responses to Question: How Many Times Have You Personally Experienced the Following Types of Racism?

Type of Incident	% of Participants Experiencing Frequency of Incidents			
	0	1–3	4–7	>7
Verbal harassment/discrimination	40.4	46.8	10.6	2.1
Visual representation of racism/prejudice	50.0	34.7	6.5	8.7
Action-based racism	63.0	30.4	4.3	2.1
Other discriminatory acts/microaggressions	20.4	38.6	15.9	25.0

Note. $N = 47$.

During the qualitative interview phase, Eddie commented on facing personal experiences of racism when he stated,

> It gets a bit exhausting when I have to prove myself to students and colleagues [regarding my race]. Yes, I am a dean whether or not I have a tie and sport coat on . . . I have to give [dress] much more thought because otherwise I'm having to constantly explain to people my abilities and preparation for the position. This is the microaggression I face on a daily basis.

Aware that others have experienced racism on their campus. Table 4.7 illustrates the racial breakdown of professionals when asked whether or not they had been aware of, someone had told them about, or they had observed acts of racism on their campus. The majority (85.3%) of survey participants, regardless of race, indicated that they were aware of incidents of racism on their campus. A small percentage (14.7%) stated that they were not aware of any acts of racism on-campus. Thus, survey participants were generally very aware of the problems of racism on-campus, even if they had not personally experienced racism.

Table 4.7.

Responses to Question: Have You Been Aware of, Has Someone Told You About, or Have You Observed Acts of Racism While Working in Your Role as a Student Affairs Professional?

	Total		White		African American		Other Persons of Color	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	145	85.3	79	88	26	83	17	81
No	25	14.7	10	12	5	17	3	19
Total / %	170	100.0	89	100	31	100	20	100

Lee, a male interviewee, described his experience regarding awareness that others were experiencing racism on their campuses. Lee stated that "I identify as White, and I don't really think it is possible for me to experience racism . . . it's mainly me witnessing it happening, as opposed to it happening to me." Overall, participants spoke about the impact racism has on their lives and work in many different ways.

Pervasiveness of racism on college campuses. The pervasiveness of racism on college campuses was addressed in the survey with participants responding to the question: "Overall, how pervasive is racism on the college campus in which you currently work?" A response scale from 0 (*not at all pervasive*) to 100 (*extremely pervasive*) was presented. All 171 participants responded to this question with an average mean pervasiveness score of 55.00. When looking at specific individual scores for this pervasiveness question, a few individuals responded with a score of 0 and a few individuals with a score of 100. The mean score for respondent perception of how pervasive racism was on their campus differed based on their own personal experience with racism, $t(186) = 4.074$ $p = .000$. Respondents that *had* personally experienced racism were more likely to judge racism on campus as pervasive ($M = 63.30$) than survey participants that had *not* personally experienced racism ($M = 50.44$). This range and the difference in mean scores

indicated that perception of pervasiveness of racism varied widely and was perceived differently by participants based on their individual lived experiences. If a respondent had experienced racism themselves, or was aware of racism on-campus, then their perception of the pervasiveness was higher than those that were not aware or had not experienced racism.

Two different questions in the survey pulled back many of the layers of the rate of racism by asking participants to reflect on how often they had heard of these same types of racism. Table 4.8 quantifies what types of racism the participant had been aware of, someone had told them about, or they had observed while on-campus. Participants had overwhelmingly been aware of verbal harassment/discrimination (87.5%) on-campus as well as visual (76.6%) and action-based (57.8%) incidents of racism. Of the incidents, 39.4% were verbal and 34.5% were visual representations of racism/prejudice on-campus. These quantitative data are supported by narrative stories that interview and focus group participants shared about seeing imagery on-campus that was racially charged and offensive.

Table 4.8

Responses to Question: What types of Racism Have You Been Aware of, *Someone Has Told You About*, *or Have You Observed While On-Campus?*

Type of Incident	Frequency	%
Verbal harassment/discrimination (language aimed at putting someone down due to race)	112	39.4
Visual representation of racism/prejudice (signage, graffiti, etc.)	98	34.5
Action-based racism (campus protests or demonstrations, physical altercations, etc.)	74	26.1
Total	284	100.0

Note. $N = 134$.

Finally, Table 4.9 shows the number of times survey respondents were aware of, someone had told them about, or they had observed each type of racism. Table 4.7 shows overall responses whereby participants could select multiple items.

Table 4.9.

Responses to Question: How Many Times Have You Been Aware of, Someone Has Told You About, or Have You Observed These Types of Racism?

Statements	0	1–3	4–7	>7
Verbal harassment/discrimination	12.7%	55.9%	17.9%	13.4%
Visual representation of racism/prejudice	17.9%	52.2%	22.4%	7.4%
Action-based racism	32.5%	55.3%	7.5%	4.5%
Other discriminatory acts/microaggressions	27.2%	31.5%	15.8%	25.4%

Note. $N = 134$.

A large majority (87.3%) of the student affairs professional survey respondents were aware of at least one verbal harassment/discrimination incident of racism on their campus in the past academic year and about one-third (31.3%) had been aware of more than four incidents in the past academic year.

Further descriptions of experiences with racism on campus. The qualitative interviews garnered a wide range of responses to the question of how one experiences racism and helped to develop each of the themes presented previously in this chapter. Descriptions of experiences with racism ranged from consistent microaggressive behaviors to more overt forms of directed action and language.

When thinking about educating on topics of racism at the expense of Persons of Color, Serena reflected:

> Multiple Students of Color felt as though they were needing to educate their peers at the cost of their own wellness. While simultaneously feeling terrified that these people would go out into the field and work out their "shit" on their Students of Color.

As a whole, student affairs survey respondents noted that response is often too slow. Brit stated:

> Emails come out, you know, saying "this was horrible" or "we, as a such and such institution, are an inclusive community" and "we don't stand or condone x." I think the emails are falling on deaf ears because your actions speak louder than words . . . I'm tired of the emails, personally.

Tamara noted the reactionary nature of responses stating, "I believe higher education as a whole is very reactive. We wait until something happens and then we put together a plan," and Denise stated, more bluntly, that "student affairs here is so crisis oriented that many of us who are NOT working in crisis, are invisible."

These comments reflected the state of student affairs broadly and how the field responds to incidents of racism. When analyzing further, one begins to unearth the ways in which racism impacts the individual student affairs professional. Eddie discussed:

> I'm "the only" here. I'm one of two Black men at my level in the entire division. I'm the only Black man in our office. That's not lost on me. I think in some ways, in a tokenizing way, I'm carrying that flag for what it means to be a Black dean. Students have this perception. Staff have this perception. I'm trying to be fully who I am and completely who I am in this space.

Various other Participants of Color echoed this sentiment of the theme "numbers" and the ways in which it plays out in their work. Omar stated that, "my experiences at the various institutions I've worked at have been predominantly White institutions and I've been the only minority person on-staff at those places." Brit was blunter in referencing this phenomenon when she stated, "someone made a comment to me about being hired to 'check a checkbox.' That kind of hurt because I know what I bring to the table and I don't think people would get to that conclusion unless it was racially charged." Finally, Jane, a White woman, voiced the same theme

in relation to Students of Color when she exclaimed that, “I’ve heard students say before that they came to the realization that *they* were the diversity numbers that they were sold on during the recruitment process. They have said things like ‘I’m the diversity plan, I can see it clearly.”

Serena described an incident of microaggression when telling the story of a former supervisor who identifies as White.

> At one point, my supervisor communicated to HR that she didn’t feel ‘safe’ around me, so she put a third person in the room with us during our one-on-ones to take notes. But, that person was another supervisee of hers (another White person); so two White people would stare at me and write down everything I said.

A survey participant reflected on this notion stating

> Most of the racism I have experienced in this field has come in the form of microaggressions. Comments about my hair, touching my hair without permission, shock at my ability to perform, making assumptions about what I am doing or not doing.

Another survey participant described a microaggression as “lack of recognition of my earned title and degree when everyone else in the room who held that title and degree was recognized for theirs.” Being ignored or confused was mentioned by this survey response: “colleagues mixing me up with another Black man on staff or on-campus and past negative experiences of a White woman colleague working with the previous director being placed onto me.” As well as “being ignored by colleagues (they will speak to all other White colleagues and ignore me as the only Black person); being left out of conversations I should be a part of.”

Finally, an example of microaggressive behavior came from a survey participant. This participant described the ways in which a student evaluated her course content:

> In an end of semester evaluation, a student shared that I “overpowered” my co-facilitator during the course. I can understand monitoring airtime as a meaningful piece of feedback, but to say that I, as a plus-sized Black woman, overpowered my White male co-facilitator, was an overstatement and communicated a message of physical threat or harm.

This participant ended by stating “microaggressions [in this field] are constant. It happens so often I can’t even really quantify it.”

White dominance became an emerging theme throughout the collection of data for this study, and was particularly impacted by the events in Charlottesville, Virginia in August of 2017. Participants were not hesitant in naming the ways in which more overt acts of racism have impacted them, namely couching them within the White normative system of higher education. One survey respondent stated that they witnessed “a student building a ‘wall’ between her and her Mexican roommate in the room, thinking it was funny.” Finally, Brit shared experiencing blatant racism “in those moments I’ve been called ‘n-word’ multiple times by students. Mainly by White male students in particular.” Finally, a survey respondent shared an overall reflection after years of service in student affairs. This individual felt:

> It’s not going away. Sometimes it’s hiding under the rug, and other times it rears its ugly head. I’ve been dealing with these issues since I started over 28 years ago and I’m sure it will be an issue for those in the profession to address long after I’m gone. I expect it to get even worse given the current political climate nationwide.

In reflecting on the ways in which racism is experienced by student affairs professionals, Riley reflected that, “I think people are emotionally feeling pulled and/or forced to think about race in a more regular basis because of our national climate. That I am certain of.”

The importance of support and self-care was also evident and required in many lives of the interviewees. Denise commented on the intersectionality of race and gender by stating, “as women we have been socialized, particularly in underrepresented populations, have been socialized to take care of the other.” Finally, a survey participant summed up this question by reflecting that “racism at the VP and chief student affairs officer level is a scary thing. I experience racial battle fatigue every single day.” Elements of racism infect every area and level within the field.

What are the responsibilities that student affairs professionals bear when confronted with incidents of racism on campus? Everyone is responsible for being a part of the solutions to solving racial problems on a college campus; however, the crux of the responsibility falls on the individual person for doing their part to make the environment more equitable and inclusive.

Narrative responses on student affairs responsibilities when confronted with racism on campus. Education at the individual level as well as educating at the expense of Persons of Color became regular themes in addressing this research question. Rob and Lee, both White males participating in the qualitative interviews, addressed the need for education amongst White people. Rob opined that, "from a racial standpoint it's frustrating for People of Color. Like 'all the things I'm doing and now I have to teach you too,' this gets placed on them unnecessarily." Lee added that "being a White person who is committed to doing this work [dismantling racism] comes with some costs" insinuating that a White person involved in this work needs to do more self-work rather than always relying on the People of Color to assist. Denise summed up this sentiment by recognizing the fear involved:

> I think particularly for my White colleagues I've heard them say, "I just don't think I'm ready, I just don't have the tools," well . . . I'm glad you feel like you have the option because there are folks who everyday do not have this option.

The concept of "ally" was raised in the survey question, "During the past academic year, how many times have you acted as either an ally or support person for someone experiencing racism?" The majority (71%) of respondents had acted as an ally or support person *at least* one time in the past academic year. Close to half (44.6%) had acted as an ally or support person 1–3 times in the past academic year. An additional 26.7% had acted in this capacity 4–7 times, and 18% had acted in this capacity 7 or more times. On the opposite end of the scale, 10.7% answered 0 times.

Survey participants were very upfront with the needs and responsibilities of student affairs professionals when being confronted with racism on campus. One participant shared that they "would like to see more education, programs, training and dialogues on critical Whiteness on my campus for students as well as faculty and staff." Another survey participant stated more emphatically:

> I would ask People of Color what support they need and do that. I currently challenge White supremacy and racism in every space I have access to. Sometimes that's verbalizing why something is problematic, sometimes that's changing policy, sometimes . . . most times . . . it's making the White folks feel uncomfortable.

During the focus group discussion, participants brainstormed types of intervention strategies and sought to explore the differences between what participants would feel *comfortable* participating in and what ways Colleagues of Color would *expect* their White counterparts to participate. This led to survey questions developed around types of intervention acts one would take as well as a comparison question for Participants of Color's expectancies of their White counterparts.

Survey responses to questions on responsibility of student affairs professionals when confronted with racism on campus. All participants responded to the question of how they would typically intervene when acts of racism happen on campus. Of note, participants overwhelmingly (86.9%) felt as though they would *definitely* support those hurt or targeted by racism by discussing the incident/climate and showing compassion. Constructing educational opportunities for others to dialogue about the incident or climate was supported by the majority of participants, with 45.5% saying they would *definitely* and an additional 44.8% saying they *may* take this action. Many would take this support even further by stepping in to disrupt the abusive act. Almost all of the respondents indicated they would either *definitely* (42.1%) or *possibly* (55.1%) step in to disrupt the verbal or visual act of racism/discrimination. Participant

responses showed that it would be harder to challenge the perpetrator of the action, with 32.4% *definitely* agreeing and 56.5% saying they *may* step in and challenge the perpetrator. One survey respondent summed this phenomenon by stating, "I want to support my colleagues, I really do. But oftentimes I do not know how because I do not want to add any pain to what they've already experienced."

Table 4.10 displays the percent distribution for participant intervention acts when acts of racism happen on-campus. All participants, regardless of racial identity, were asked to answer this question.

Table 4.10

Percentage Distributions for Intervention Acts Respondent Typically Takes When Acts of Racism Happen On-Campus

Statements	No, I would not take this action.	Yes, this may be something I would do.	Yes, this is something I definitely would do.
Stepping-in to disrupt the verbal or visual act of racism/discrimination	2.6%	55.1%	42.1%
Support those hurt or targeted by racism by discussing the incident/climate and showing compassion	0.0%	13.1%	86.9%
Construct educational opportunities for others to dialogue about the incident/climate	9.6%	44.8%	45.5%
Challenge the perpetrators	11.0%	56.5%	32.4%
Other (to be described below)	22.2%	33.3%	44.4%

Note. $N = 145$.

Table 4.11 details those same intervention acts by racial category. It is important to dissect this information because it paints a clearer picture of what participants are *willing* to do followed by what is expected of colleagues to do in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11

Percentage Distributions for Intervention Acts Respondent Typically Takes When Acts of Racism Happen On-Campus by Racial Category

Question	Action	Total		African American		White		Other Persons of Color	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Intervene by stepping-in to disrupt the verbal or visual act of racism/ discrimination	No, I would not take this action.	4	3.9	1	3.2	2	2.3	1	4.8
	Yes, this may be something I do.	78	55.3	19	61.3	49	55.1	10	47.6
	Yes, this is something I definitely would do.	59	41.8	11	35.5	38	42.7	10	47.6
Step in by supporting those hurt by racism by discussing the incident/climate and showing compassion.	No, I would not take this action.	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Yes, this may be something I do.	19	13.5	3	9.7	10	11.2	6	28.6
	Yes, this is something I definitely would do.	122	86.5	28	90.3	79	88.8	15	71.4
Stepping in by constructing educational opportunities	No, I would not take this action.	13	0.1	1	3.2	10	11.2	2	9.5
	Yes, this may be something I do.	65	46.1	13	41.9	44	49.4	8	38.1
	Yes, this is something I definitely would do.	63	44.7	17	54.8	35	39.3	11	52.4
Step in by challenging the perpetrators	No, I would not take this action.	16	11.3	4	12.9	8	9.0	4	19.1
	Yes, this may be something I do.	78	55.3	16	51.6	52	58.4	10	47.6
	Yes, this is something I definitely would do.	47	33.3	11	35.5	29	32.6	7	33.3

Note. N = 141. Forty-seven respondents did not provide race information.

As shown on Table 4.11, about one-third of all respondents stated they would *definitely step-in to challenge the perpetrator*. This percent was consistent across all racial groups, with 35.5% of African American/Black, 32.6% or White, and 33.3% of Other Persons of Color indicating that they would definitely step-in to challenge the perpetrator.

There were differences across races in the percent that would *definitely step in to support those hurt by racism by discussing the incident/climate and showing compassion*; over 90 percent of those that identified as African American/Black, 88.8% of White respondents and 71.4% of Other Persons of Color stated that they would take this action. There was a statistically significant difference at the $p < .10$ level for exploratory research, with χ^2 (2) = 4.87, $p = .088$ and N = 141. The "Other Persons of Color" respondents were less likely than White or African American respondents to indicate they would definitely offer this type of support. (See Table 4.11.)

For *stepping in to disrupt the verbal or visual act of racism/ discrimination*, and *constructing educational opportunities* there was no statistically significant difference across racial groups. These data suggest that student affairs professionals, regardless of their race, were likely think they would take on these intervention efforts.

Action expectations compared to actions willing to take. Stepping in to challenge a perpetrator is a harrowing act. About one-third (35.5%) of survey respondents of any race responded that they would *step in to challenge a perpetrator*. On the other hand, 78.4% of Persons of Color respondents wanted their White counterparts to *step in to challenge the perpetrators*. For *challenging the perpetrators* there was statistically significant difference across racial groups at the exploratory research $p < .10$ level, with χ^2 (2) = 3.12, $p = .077$ and ($N = 52$).

A high (82.7%) percentage of respondents also indicated that they would definitely appreciate if someone *stepped-in to disrupt the verbal or visual act of racism/discrimination*. This was again much higher than the 42.7% that indicated that they themselves would take this action.

More than two-thirds of all respondents indicated they would appreciate someone *stepping in to disrupt the incident*, *support those hurt or targeted by discussing the incident/climate and showing compassion*, and *constructing educational opportunities.* There were no statistically significant differences across race categories for these actions.

Comparison of what participants of color want and what colleagues indicated they would definitely do. Participants of Color (82.7%) responded that they would *definitely* appreciate White colleagues *stepping-in to disrupt the verbal or visual act of racism*. In contrast, 42.7% of White respondents agreed that this is something they would definitely do.

Participants of Color overwhelmingly (78.4%) agreed that they would *definitely* appreciate their White counterparts *challenging the perpetrators* of the racist acts. At the same time, a much lower 32.6% of White participants indicated they would *definitely* do this action. Similarly, 35.5% of African American respondents and 33.3% of other Persons of Color stated that they would *definitely* step-in by *challenging the perpetrator*. However, an additional 55.3% of total participants agree that they *may challenge said perpetrator*.

Close to 87% of all participants said that they would *support* those hurt or targeted by racism *by discussing the incident/climate and showing compassion*. A somewhat lower percentage (69.2%) of Respondents of Color indicated they would *definitely* appreciate this type of support. (See Table 4.12.)

Table 4.12

Responses of All Participants of Color Only to Question: When Acts of Racism Happen On-Campus, What Would You Want Your White Counterparts to Do?

Statements	No, this action would not be helpful %	Yes, this may be a good action %	Yes, I would definitely appreciate this action %
Step-in to disrupt the verbal or visual act of racism/discrimination	0.0	17.3	82.7
Support those hurt or targeted by racism by discussing the incident/climate and showing compassion	1.9	28.8	69.2
Construct educational opportunities for others to dialogue about the incident/climate	5.7	25.0	69.2
Challenge the perpetrators	0.0	21.5	78.4
Other (Please describe below)	0.0	20.0	80.0

Note. $N = 52$.

What are the needs of student affairs professionals when facing racism, and how do student affairs professionals stay present to their students in those situations? Support of one another was a key theme. However, another take-away was the lack of support generally given to student affairs professionals on-campus. Eddie described that, "If I didn't have some people I can talk to when the BS happens, you know, I just don't think I would be able to be here." A survey participant succinctly stated that they had

> No one [to rely on for support]. It festers and manifests physically, socially, psychologically, even spiritually. Then I'm labeled as angry and bitter. It is a constant cycle of powerlessness. It is much bigger than me and I would only be a casualty if I attempted to fix it.

Tamara commented on the environment in higher education in general by stating

> Higher Ed is a great field, but we . . . how do I put this . . . we tell folks that we will be there for them, yet we are not. Or we tell folks "you can come talk to me in confidence"

> and share something, yet those people may go around [to others] and share [rather than with me].

One question on the survey asked specifically where participants turn to for support. More than half of the survey respondents (51.1%), received some kind of support from their colleagues on-campus, either within their unit/department or outside of their own unit/department, when incidents of racism occurred. A much lower percentage received support from their immediate supervisor (14.9%), colleagues and peers at other institutions (14.9%) or heads of divisions (4.3%). Participants were able to select more than one response. Table 4.13 shows the distribution of responses for this "choose all that apply" question.

Table 4.13.

Responses to Question: When Personally Faced With Racism On-Campus, Where Do You Typically Turn for Support?

	N	%
Colleagues/peers within unit/department	26	27.7
Colleagues/peers outside of unit/department	22	23.4
Immediate supervisor	14	14.9
Colleagues/peers at other institutions	14	14.9
Head of Division (if different from immediate supervisor)	4	4.3
President/Chancellor (if different from immediate supervisor)	0	0
Other (please describe)	14	14.9
Total Responses	94	100.0

As for supportive safe spaces, Serena recalled meeting a fellow Woman of Color for the first time:

> I remember very vividly our first colleague "date" and thinking so clearly that "this was a safe person," someone who was critically conscious because there's that phrase "not all skin folk are kin folk"; you can work in an institution or live in a community and people who look like you still may not share your world view.

Rob yearned for this type of dialogue amongst others who look like him when he shared "one of my biggest struggles since my experience at SJTI [Social Justice Training Institute] is finding other White men who share similar values and philosophies on this topic."

Serena echoed these sentiments by evaluating the lack of supportive spaces by the institution at-large:

> They liked diversity programs to the extent that it was good in a brochure. But any time those conversations led to really critical conversations about ways in which the institution or key players needed to evaluate their own work; to be able to recognize the ways in which they were complicit in perpetuating racism, that's when it was like [brake squealing sound], it was like "put the brakes on."

In providing educational opportunities, the focus shifted as well to White individuals' needs to be able to name the issues at hand. One survey participant stated that

> White folks need to address their bias and privilege and work to deconstruct institutions of White supremacy. [We need to] center People of Color's [experiences and perspectives]. Provide resources for Staff of Color. Listen to and follow the lead of People of Color. Develop policies that are inclusive (i.e., dress code). Be a sanctuary campus.

Finally, student affairs professionals need empathy and compassion turned towards them as much as they need to put that out for their colleagues. One survey participant stated, "The microaggressions that occur in our field, particularly in the social media context, are overwhelming. It's hard to believe we are the same field in social media as we are at our national conferences." Another survey participant stated,

> I want to stress the importance of noting when folks are enacting microaggressions/other racist or discriminatory behavior, and then attempting to call them in and help them to be both accountable for those actions and act better in the future.

Fay shared her perspective that "empathy makes you sit still and listen. If we were to just listen more in this field, rather than always try to fight back which is how it feels, maybe we would make more progress towards the greater good." "Reflection," as Rob stated,

> Gives you the gift of realizing why you are the way you are, who you are in relation to one another, and how you can contribute to making this world a more equitable place for all. Our field struggles with this mightily.

Envisioning a racism free campus. Participants in the survey were asked to respond to five items detailing how strongly they felt various policies or practices were in-place to help them feel as though they were a part of a racism-free campus. Mean scores, ranged between 3.17 and 3.96, for these statements, showing that respondents tended to agree these policies and practices were in place, but some were more evident than others. When the percentage *agree* and *strongly agree* were combined for the statements about aspects of the campus policies and practices, there was a high level of agreement that empathy and compassion (81.3%) and a supportive supervisor and network of colleagues (75.8%) were generally present on the respondents' campuses. Having systems in place to respond in timely manner (60.6% *agree* or *strongly agree*) and education around diversity and inclusion (64.8%) were perceived as being somewhat less often present on their campuses. Job security for participation in activism was less frequently perceived as present (32.3%). Table 4.14 shows the overall responses to this question.

Table 4.14

Responses to Question: In Thinking About What You Need to Feel You Are Part of a Racism Free Institution of Higher Education, How Strongly Do You Disagree or Agree That Your Institution Provides Each of the Following?

Statements	*M*	Strongly Disagree %	Disagree %	Neither Disagree nor Agree %	Agree %	Strongly Agree %
Systems are in place to address and respond to incidents of racism in a timely manner	3.46	4.8	20.0	14.4	45.5	15.1
Supportive supervisors and networks of colleagues	3.81	2.0	9.6	12.4	57.2	18.6
Education on-campus around inclusion, diversity, social justice, and critical Whiteness	3.67	6.2	12.4	16.5	37.9	26.9
Job security for participating in activism	3.17	6.2	19.3	42.0	15.8	16.5
Empathy and compassion from colleagues	3.96	0.0	8.9	9.6	57.9	23.4
Other (Please describe below)	3.33	8.3	8.3	50.0	8.3	25.0

Note. $N = 145$.

A t-test was administered to look at differences in mean scores for what student affairs professionals need to feel as though they are a part of a racism free institution. For differences between Carnegie Class doctoral versus non-doctoral institution types there was no statistically significant difference across institution type for any of these practices. Empathy and compassion from colleagues ($M = 3.96$), supportive supervisors and colleagues ($M = 3.81$), and educational efforts around diversity and inclusion ($M = 3.67$) were the most prevalent at both the doctoral and non-doctoral institution types. Respondents were least likely to perceive job security

(M = 3.17) as present in their institution. Educational efforts around diversity and inclusion, as well as supportive supervisors and colleagues, and a perceived concern about job security was mirrored by the qualitative feedback offered from participants.

In what kinds of ways can student affairs professionals voice their support of the student experience and speak out against the racism on campus? When it comes to ways a student affairs professional can support students and speak out against the racism being experienced, much of the conversation came from survey participants discussing their needs for policies and strong leadership. One survey participant stated:

> Student affairs likes to say it is committed to diversity but falls short on the work needed to be effective. We work hard to maintain systems in place that disenfranchise folks and are constantly creating new systems. Whenever there is an issue on campus, we typically respond by making a policy. Those policies are typically developed by White folks. Additionally, we are so obsessed with being sued or losing donors that no one is brave enough to stand up for justice. It's gross.

Another survey participant pointed to the policies needed by stating:

> [We need] proactive systems in place, not just react when incidents happen, but proactively respond to current events and the student experience. Additionally, that words are put into action. Regardless of the "pie chart of diversity" at an institution, pervasive racism is not only a change in culture but a change in how we view action.

Along with policy changes and the response universities typically provide, a call to action with White colleagues was shared. One survey participant shared that

> Most student affairs Professionals of Color are doing self-work in this area because it is our survival. We need White professionals to advocate for paradigm shifts in policies, procedures, performance evaluations, curriculum, crisis response, and other major aspects of the university that are rooted in White supremacy.

Brit, an interviewee, concurred as well as stating that "I've seen it [support of students] from the people I expect to see there; the same people who are always supporting the Students of Color who are the Professional Staff Members of Color."

Finally, many participants commented on the national climate and needing to provide support for our more conservative students. Although campuses grapple with supporting students in the current national climate, many are attempting to find ways to also support the voice of those pleased with the current climate. One survey participant, in answering this particular research question, told the following story:

> Our campus has a "democracy wall," where students are able to write anything that they want in chalk anonymously. It has become the place of the biggest divide on campus more so now that the Trump Administration is in the White House. It is not a place where issues are respectfully voiced, but a place where hurtful, ignorant words get prime real estate on campus for a minimum of one week. It makes me feel [as a student affairs professional] as if we are failing our students in two ways: 1) failing to educate our students who are more privileged and 2) allowing such language to be displayed where our marginalized students walk to class day after day. I often wonder if this lesson in democracy is really worth the damage we are doing to those in our community.

What impedes a student affairs professional from supporting their students and one another when incidents occur? One of the largest impediments to supporting students and one another on-campus that was shared in the research was the fear of job security. This fear, coupled with the sense that student affairs professionals are working in an environment stifled with White normative expectations, has created barriers that are insurmountable. Christina spoke regularly about the fear of losing her job by saying "but there was the overall fear of 'if I want to show my support or become active will I have a job to come back to?'" Omar also mentioned this concern saying, "for folks to be able to keep their jobs they have to meet with students and support students, but there are just things they can't do with or for students so that they don't fear losing their jobs." A survey participant also spoke to this phenomenon tying our personal values in with our sense of job security:

> A pattern I've noticed amongst student affairs professionals is difficulty processing one's position, role, obligation, responsibility, etc. . . . when dealing with racism, activism, etc. . . . Because sometimes your obligation to your professional role may be contrary to what you as a person feel you need to do, value, or say.

Job security scored the lowest mean score ($M = 3.27$) for policies and practices in place on respondent campuses. It is clear from interview quotes and the statistical data that student affairs professionals fear retaliation if participating in, or supporting activism on-campus, and do not feel they have the same job security that tenured faculty members enjoy.

Speaking to the White dominance that makes up much of higher education, another impediment to student affairs professionals supporting one another and students is the sheer system at-play. In discussing students, Denise stated

> We put these students on these 'auction blocks' where basically institutions are lining up and throwing numbers and basically we accept, right, Students of Color, but because we don't do anything to make them feel welcome, or make them want to stay . . . it's just about getting them here.

She continued the thought by recalling, "I think we do that with our faculty and staff as well. We want the numbers, but we don't want to do anything to keep them. And when we get them here, we run them into the ground." Lee also spoke to this notion recognizing that there is this "unwillingness to address real aspects of racism and White supremacy that happens every day" and that "institutionally or systemically there needs to be an overhaul in looking at Whiteness, White supremacy, and racism that is imbedded in our institutions." Finally, one survey participant shared their overall picture of their campus by highlighting, "We had posters hanging on campus that read 'It's okay to be White.' These microaggressions are a constant on our campus."

Conversations on-campus, and within the field of student affairs, are occurring, however. One question on the survey asked participants was, "How strongly you disagree or agree with feeling comfortable speaking to someone outside of my own race or ethnicity at work about racism occurring on-campus?" Of the 150 responses to this question about one-third (34.6%) *strongly agreed* that they felt comfortable speaking with someone outside of their own race about

racism occurring on-campus. An additional 48.2% *agreed*, with 8.6% stating that they *neither disagree nor agree*. Finally, 6.6% *disagreed* and 2% *strongly disagreed* that they felt comfortable speaking with someone outside of their own race about racism occurring on-campus.

Levels of Engagement

The final focus group examined data gathered throughout the first three phases of the research study and concluded emphatically that the work "not stop here," but continue moving forward into action for the field of student affairs. When synthesizing the data overall, the focus group distinguished three themes that they saw: individual action steps that student affairs professionals need and are willing to commit to for eradicating racism; awareness of issues of racism on campus and within the field of student affairs, or the group level; and the systemic nature of racism on college campuses, or the community level. To summarize this chapter, key data points previously discussed in this chapter are therefore aligned on these three levels.

This important distinction (the individual, group, and community levels), was also present in the quantitative data including where participants received support when incidents of racism occurred on-campus, how pervasive racism is in their work life (individual level), what participants are willing to do to support one another and what Participants of Color *expect* from their White colleagues in the field (group level), and what is needed from their universities to feel as though they were a part of a "racism free" institution (community level). These levels were an important way that the focus group participants viewed the "now what" aspect of this study.

Action steps for student affairs professionals, or individual level. Respondents noted that individual actions count and are needed. Of note, 71% of participants had *acted as an ally or*

support person at least one time in the past year. A high 82.2% of survey participants *strongly agree* or *agree* that they are comfortable *speaking with someone outside of their own race about racism on-campus*. A similar high 86.9% of participants felt as though they would *definitely support those hurt or targeted by racism by discussing the incident/climate and showing compassion*, while 42.1% would *definitely* and 55.1% would *possibly step-in to disrupt the verbal or visual act of racism/discrimination*. It seems to be much harder to *challenge the perpetrator* as 32.4% *definitely* would do this act and 56.5% indicated they only *may* step in to *challenge the perpetrator*.

When examining the questions around expectancy by race groups, over 90.3% of African Americans would step-in to *support someone being hurt or targeted by racism by discussing the incident/climate and showing compassion.* A similar 88.8% of Whites would do the same, and 71.4 Other Persons of Color would take this action. More than two-thirds (69.2%) of All Persons of Color would *definitely appreciate* someone stepping in to support them in this way.

Finally, 51% of student affairs professionals get their support from colleagues/peers either within their department or other departments across campus which supports the earlier sentiment of student affairs professionals feeling as though there is some sort of supportive network for them at work.

All of the participants in the study who identify as People of Color referenced self-care and desiring to see the university support self-care initiatives. In talking about his experiences as the "only Dean of Color" on his campus, Eddie shared that "self-care is a very personal thing for myself and is not one that I share with others." Similarly, Omar shared that since he is often the "only" Person of Color in his department, his notion of self-care is to "leave that space [his work

space] and seek out others who look like him outside of campus." Even working in an HBCU, Tamara concurred that, "I need my self-care time and I know others do too. It would be nice if there were intentional spaces and times designed by and supported by my division."

Racism and awareness of racism within student affairs profession, or group level. When studying race and racism, particularly on a college campus, one must first be aware that this is a real phenomenon occurring. Student affairs Professionals of Color, unsurprisingly, face racism regularly throughout their daily lives on-campus. African Americans (77.4%) and Other Persons of Color (70.0%) were significantly more likely to experience racism than White (2.2%) survey respondents. Overall, 85.3% of survey respondents, regardless of race, indicated that they were aware of incidents of racism on their campus, indicating that racism occurs at a high rate and we, as a field, know about it and are aware that it is happening. Furthermore, 87.3% of survey respondents were aware of at least one verbal harassment/discrimination incident (the highest form of reported racist acts) on their campus in the past year. An additional 31.3% of respondents had been aware of more than four incidents, demonstrating the high frequency at which these particular types of incidents are occurring.

Overall, the field of student affairs is aware of incidents of racism and the breadth of the problem seems to permeate most of the country as this particular survey study reached individuals at college and university campuses across the states. Out of the original seven themes developed from the qualitative interviews, several speak to the importance of awareness for student affairs professionals. Empathy, having compassion for one another, encouraging true conversation and dialogue, and reflecting on the issues of racism and their impact on the field, also illuminate the importance of awareness.

Lee emphasized that his "White identified colleagues need to continue to do the important self-work necessary to understand their privilege and power" before "engaging with others who do not share those same privileges". Riley echoed those sentiments stating that his fellow "Colleagues of Color also need to engage in this type of self-work to understand that they *also* carry many dominant and privileged identities" that they bring to this work. In her email to the focus group post-meeting, Denise stated that "if our field were to come together a bit more on some of these issues, and work to support one another as evidenced by your survey data, then perhaps we'll be able to make a greater impact on the university system." She closed by stating "they [the majority White university system administration] cannot ignore us [student affairs] forever if we continue to push for this type of change as a unified group."

Even within our field of student affairs, racism is alive and well. For a field that espouses values of social justice, inclusion, and holds the diversity of our field as a hallmark of the profession, participants shared in the qualitative interviews as well as survey narratives that racism within, particularly in social media spaces, is quite rampant. Lee shared concerns over White identified individuals putting down or "shaming" other White individuals who do not seem as "woke" as them. Serena expressed concern that we are sending out these new student affairs professionals into the field who are going to "wreak havoc" due to their inability to complete the self-work needed around identity exploration. This, coupled with their lack of compassion and empathy, will "make for difficult situations for their Colleagues of Color in the field", according to Serena. It was suggested in the survey narratives that members of our field, particularly those of us with dominant identities, need to do more listening and centering the voices of those with marginalized identities. One survey respondent stated that "we [White-identified student affairs professionals] need to get out of our own way and listen to our

Colleagues of Color." This should include, but not be limited to "supporting our Colleagues of Color by going to them when incidents occur, but also to not be afraid to just sit in a space and listen when they [Colleagues of Color] are frustrated and hurt [by the racism on-campus]". Christina shared that when she was with her students during these types of incidents that she was cognizant to just "create space and listen to their hurt. Not from a condescending or patronizing perspective, but from an intentional and 'in-the-moment' type of way." Additionally, during the first focus group, Denise shared that the idea of liberation included her White colleagues in the field being "genuine and empathetic" in their concern. She continued,

> Sometimes my greatest [White] allies have been those who are not afraid to just sit there and listen and let me show emotion. When Colleagues of Color feel there is enough trust and safety to share the hurt caused by racism in their lives, the best thing to do is not say "I know how you feel" or try to brush away the incident, but sometimes just listen and give us that space.

Brit described the systems in education that prohibits certain individuals from obtaining access to this education. "Even in student affairs", Brit explains, "certain master's degree programs carry more weight than others, but do we all have access to those programs?" Christina suggested that the field of student affairs continue to develop and require cultural competency certifications to "ensure we are all on the same page and speaking with common and constructive language around these topics." If there are standards around cultural competencies, then the field can work towards educating one another in a compassionate way. Rather than shaming and putting one another down for not "being woke enough," according to Lee, "our field can encourage authentic and compassionate dialogue built on trust and acceptance of one another's lived experiences." Jane supported the notion that graduate programs ensure "not only diverse faculty representation, but representation of diverse perspectives," similarly to Denise who stated that our student development theories "continue to expand and include these incredible diverse

perspectives that are now emerging and being published." Ultimately, student affairs needs to continue to lead the way with conversation and education on-campus around racism and its impact. As demonstrated by quotes from participants in this study, student affairs is regularly called upon to address these issues and support students. Our field can and should be the leaders on our campus working to create positive change when it comes to equity and inclusion. Fay and Serena both supported this notion. "We [student affairs professionals]," according to Fay, "cannot sit idly by waiting for the men in-charge to make decisions for people who are being impacted by racism on-campus, we must continue to lead." Similarly, Serena shared that

> Student affairs are experts in this area. Yes, we need to continuously improve and take better care of one another, but we can lead the way on our campuses if we know we have the support from our upper administration.

Fear is a theme connected to action steps moving forward in that job security needs to be supported for student affairs professionals and the field needs to work towards eliminating the shaming element of racial justice work. Serena's statement on leading the way on our campus concluded when she shared that "this idea of administrative tenure needs to be explored. Because if we don't have the support of our upper administrators then student affairs professionals will be too afraid to lose their careers and livelihood if they are perceived to be stepping too far 'outside' of their 'lane'." Many throughout this study were critical of the shaming element present in our field as demonstrated previously. One survey respondent also added their take that

> White individuals are quick to shame other White individuals who they do not perceive to be as "woke" as them; as if there is some kind of medal you'll win for being the most socially conscious and "best racial ally" there is. This is a ridiculous notion that only pushes away potential allies and hurts our field in the long run.

Systemic nature of racism on academic campuses, or community level. The systematic nature of racism continues to thrive on college campuses at the organizational level. Two themes from the first qualitative interviews speak to this notion: response and Whiteness. There was a

divide felt between the administrative and executive side of the university (including academic affairs) and the student affairs divisions. This divided feeling is exacerbated when incidents of racism occur on campus. Administration, particularly at the executive level, was perceived to be slow to respond to incidents and reactionary. Tamara pointed out that "it is clear that the focal point [of administrators] tends to be on the fundraising aspect of their jobs and protecting the institutions' reputation." Brit spoke to the notion of the emails "falling on deaf ears" but simultaneously taking note of what the emails from upper administrators (particularly the President/Chancellor of her university) say and how genuine and authentic they feel. One survey respondent made it a point to bring up the university's response to these incidents when they stated,

> We [our university] reacts with an email and oftentimes it is a few days later. There are often words spoken about supporting everyone on-campus regardless of color or ethnicity and being "one community." The emails often also include hollow promises to continue to "do better" and challenge these incidents. Then, however, no real action is taken and we [Student Affairs Professionals of Color] take note that the incident is now just another afterthought.

Responses from the university are often crafted in a way to address the issue but quickly reiterate the values of the institution. Denise pointed to this notion by sharing "if we value inclusion and equity, as these emails and responses often say, then why are we in a position where these incidents and this culture of exclusion and racism is so rampant?"

Denise's comment speaks directly to the systematic and everyday nature of racism in our society and particularly on college campuses. The theme of Whiteness is embedded in the system and was present throughout the data gathering process of this study. When the entire system has been built on White principles and mainly by White men, then the challenge becomes not addressing incidents as they appear but changing the very culture that allows these incidents to happen so regularly in the first place. Almost every qualitative interview participant spoke to this

theme of needing to address Whiteness from a systematic perspective. “If we address the system of Whiteness and White supremacy,” according to Brit, “then perhaps issues of racism and microaggressions that myself and my peers face every day will become a thing of the past.” Microaggressions are a daily occurrence for People of Color. Participants shared in the interviews and the survey narratives that White dominance is present on college campuses due to the lack of diverse voices in positions of power and change. Another reason for the reign of White dominance on college campuses, according to Rob, are that there are,

> not enough White identified individuals in positions of power on-campus that are “woke enough” to call attention to these issues. If the Board of Trustees are mainly White people . . . mainly White men, and the president is a White guy and his cabinet is full of people who look like him, then who is going to call attention to these issues and say “hold up; maybe racism is something we can focus on addressing,” rather than where the next big donor check is coming from or how the football team is doing. It’s frustrating even for one of those guys who looks like them.

The first focus group spent considerable time mulling over the systemic nature of racism on-campus and whether or not the *system* would allow for there to ever be a college campus that was free of racism. Focus group participants were not confident that this notion would ever become reality due to the power that Whiteness had over the system but wanted to explore in the survey what would help participants *feel* as though their campus was more supportive of all employees. This particular survey question pointed to the overall picture of a “racism-free” institution in which participants stated whether or not a certain structure or values were in-place. A high 81.3% of the participants felt as though there was some empathy within their institution. About three-fourths (75.8%) felt as though they had a support network within their student affairs divisions on their campus or with colleagues across campus. Almost two-thirds (64.8%) agreed that there were educational opportunities on their campus around the topics of diversity and inclusion or that response to the incidents was timely from upper administration (60.6%).

However, only 32.3% of student affairs professionals surveyed felt as though they had the necessary job security to fully engage with the campus community when incidents of racism occurred around them.

The university needs to enact proactive measures including hiring and retaining a diverse workforce and write policy that are inclusive. During the first focus group, Riley stated that it is "one thing to hire diverse people in this field, it is quite another to retain them and that requires a concerted effort to enact policies that are inclusive." These policies, according to Denise in the focus group, "need to be written by diverse perspectives and worldviews as well. We need outside-the-box thinking that cannot always come from the same people who are writing the emails to the campus community when an incident of racism occurs."

Finally, the university needs to offer support of activism, of the dissenting voice, of free speech on-campus as well as measures to ensure self-care. A survey respondent shared their perspective that "perhaps if we offer constructive spaces for all voices to be heard then that will promote equity rather than perpetuate division." This notion of supporting the dissenting voice on-campus was discussed in the second focus group after participants read some of the comments in the survey. Riley was interested in "how this would look seeing as though it is pretty apparent nowadays that some people are taking free speech to a point where it is literally killing people" (referencing the events in Charlottesville, Virginia).

The impact that racism has on student affairs professionals is vast and far reaching. As demonstrated in this chapter, student affairs professionals are faced with incidents of racism regularly and seek support from a variety of entities. However, the systematic nature of racism will continue to persist and be pervasive in the lives of student affairs professionals unless real concrete changes are made at the organization, group, and individual level. Chapter V discusses

these implications, how this work contributes to knowledge already present in the field and presents a visual model for a way to discuss and to construct action steps for moving forward.

Chapter V: Discussion

In this concluding chapter I begin with a substantive review of my findings in terms of themes that emerged from the interviews, the focus groups and the survey. There follows a consideration of the study's limitations and its implications for future practice in the field of student affairs. As a step towards better understanding and improving practice—and in response to strong requests from the participants of this study—I then present a visual model to capture key aspects of what they (and I) understand and want in terms of managing the impacts of racism on campus. As I will discuss, the model needs further work but has already had some heuristic value in presentations I have made with student affairs professionals. I shift then to potential future research and, finally, I revisit my positionality, reflecting on this study's influence on the work I continue to do and enjoy.

This final chapter begins with a brief review of study findings linking these to literature addressing the derived themes. My review of participant discussions identified three principal themes:

- the nature of individual-level action steps that participants spoke of or called for, including self-awareness and self-work;
- racism and awareness of racism within the field of student affairs; and
- the systemic nature of racism on academic campuses, or organization level factors, including reacting versus planning.

It should be noted that, in order, these themes relate respectively to the level of individual student affairs professionals, the group level (student affairs as an entity and field), and the community level (the whole university). These levels will be used throughout the discussion in this chapter.

Action Steps for Student Affairs Professionals (Individual Level)

At the most intimate level, racism operates at the individual level. If you are a Person of Color who is being objectified, targeted, and persecuted due to skin color, the impact of racism is persistent and pervasive. This came across repeatedly during this study. Well-intentioned White people are often oblivious to their own privilege, but thereby collude in a racist society. Their (undeserved) entitlement also has subtler but potentially devastating consequences: as Du Bois (1903/1994) passionately argued more than a century ago, such Whites are living lies. My earlier discussion regarding the danger and impacts of burnout and self-censorship when speaking out about or against racism, confirmed that racism is also psychologically, emotionally, and physically damaging, be it in different ways according to dominant and dominated positions (Garcia & Zulfacar, 2015). Action steps are needed beginning at the individual level. These include educating one's self as opposed to at the expense of people of color, encouraging and supporting self-care, practicing and supporting ally-ship and facing individual fears.

Education for the self—not at the expense of People of Color. Studying and learning about White privilege, racism, equity, and inclusion are paramount in the journey of self-discovery and learning. For White people, in particular, this starts with the understanding that Whiteness is a culture and that there are many layers to unpack and interrogate (Levine-Rasky, 2016; McIntosh, 1988). As DiAngelo (2018) stated, "examining what is at the root of our emotions (shame for not knowing, guilt for hurting someone, hurt feelings because we think we must have been misunderstood) will enable us to address these frameworks" (p. 137).

White participants in this study identified that individuals in student affairs were struggling with the phenomenon of White privilege (Bonilla-Silva, 2003) and felt that their "color-blind" mentality only further delegitimizes People of Color's experience. These common

attitudes work to make the White majority narrative the barometer against which all other experiences are measured and judged.

Moreover, there is another commonly observed phenomenon seen by participants that adds to the dilemmas created for People of Color. Well-intended White individuals often turn to Persons of Color to "teach" them about their experiences. On campus, Persons of Color are asked to come into a classrooms or a team meeting to "educate" groups. The intention seems harmless and, to a White person, may even reflect genuine respect and interest. But, when this happens regularly it can become exhausting and detrimental (Essed, 2013). Participants in this study spoke about the overwhelming need and expectation for *all* people to do the hard work on and for themselves before engaging others in dialogue about race and racism on-campus.

Encouraging and supporting self-care. The last point about calling on People of Color to carry the burden of teaching Whites, underlines the need for self-care and for supporting and providing opportunities for colleagues to exercise this. By "self-care," I refer to an individual's ability to critically examine what daily activities one participates in to disconnect from the workplace. Incidents of racism on campus, as well as chronic everyday racism, impacts colleagues of all racial backgrounds each of whom react and respond in their own individualized way. Supporting self-care on the individual level involves deeply probing one's own ideas on race and racism, including how one's attitudes developed from early childhood onward, being honest with yourself about how you are "presenting" yourself and your ideals at work, and taking whatever steps are needed to persist.

Study respondents indicated that they engaged in self-care by turning to direct colleagues, both within and external to their department, for support. Since these are the people they spend the most time with, this is not surprising. Fewer respondents sought support from supervisors.

Ultimately supporting others in their self-care is an individual decision but supporters must do this with empathy and compassion if we are truly to band together as a field to combat these problems.

Practicing and supporting ally-ship. Respondents in the quantitative survey overwhelmingly indicated willingness to be a support person for someone experiencing racism. Approximately 71% of respondents said they had acted as an ally to a person at least one time in the past academic year, while Professionals of Color stated that they would appreciate this type of support (see Table 4.10). The core idea of ally-ship is people who have privilege acting in support and in solidarity with those who are less privileged and who are often the targets of discrimination (Bishop, 2015; Reason et al., 2005).

One survey respondent shared:

> While I would be very comfortable coming to the support of someone being harassed, it would be in a way that would be designed to remove them from the situation. I do not feel like I have the skills to challenge a perpetrator.

During the second focus group, when reviewing the data from the qualitative interview, Lee was struck by that comment and added: "I would venture to say that that mentality [removing the person targeted rather than confronting the perpetrator] is very common in our field." During the first focus group, Denise was hesitant to discuss whether or not a racism-free college campus, or even a student affairs division, was possible. When pressed on where she receives support, she replied:

> I will tell you the best healing and liberation I've found . . . are with people who are doing the work as co-healers. These co-healers are individuals whom I trust and love because I can be my full-self with them. If I did not have these co-healers as a "liberatory" mechanism, I wouldn't be able to survive this environment.

Challenges to individual development: Facing fear. As noted above, fear emerged as a widespread and significant challenge from the perspective of participants in this study. Tamara

stated in her interview: “It is hard to be truly compassionate if we are afraid of the repercussions.” Naming and facing the real consequences of racism is often a difficult feat, particularly for White individuals who have been conditioned to a system in which they have rarely had to consider their racial identity (Levine-Rasky, 2016; McIntosh, 1988).

The fear which participants raised in discussions had two components: one is about language and the other concerns shaming and elitism. The language issue encompasses the fear of saying the wrong thing, not being informed enough to speak on the topic of race, or, even being ostracized for not saying anything at all (Frankenberg, 1993; Pollock, 2004). Speaking from an informed position requires a person first to listen and be present for those who are affected by racism.

The second element of fear, as previously discussed, is what can be called *social justice elitism and shaming*. Elitism and shaming arise when some student affairs professionals feel they are more advanced than others in understanding and addressing racism. Consequently, they may routinely be shutting out those whom they believe are not on the same “level” as they are. One participant, Lee, described this as the “done cookies” phenomenon of some White individuals who feel as though they have done all of the self-work necessary in exploring issues of race and racism. From this almost inevitably misguided stance, such individuals feel they have the privilege of being able to ignore or avoid the very issues caused by racism. “Been there, done that” seems to be the byword. This inhibits both the done cookie and those she or he looks down on. Instead of dismissing a White colleague who is not as “progressed” or, as Lee stated, the “done cookie,” outreach needs to be made to empathetically educate and bring along deemed not as “progressed.” DiAngelo (2018) is particularly critical of this ideal when she states, “White progressives cause the most daily damage to People of Color. I define a White progressive as any

White person who thinks he or she is not racist, or is less racist, or in the 'choir,' or already 'gets it"' (p. 5).

This lack of empathy hampers progress of those who are less "done" in terms of understanding of racism socially and, also as it is embedded in their own world view. It also implies that only "stupid" people "don't get it" and completely ignores the implicit and pervasive nature of racism on-campus and within the student affairs field.

Racism and Awareness of Racism Within the Student Affairs Profession (Group Level)

The second principal theme I draw from the overall findings is about the continuing occurrence of day-to-day racism at the group level within student affairs and the extent to which there is awareness of this. These can be discussed in terms of chronic microaggressions within the field, the need for, but obstacles to brave conversations, fear and insecurity affecting student affairs professionals, stress and burnout within the field, and student affairs graduate programs as a locus of racism—and change.

Chronic microaggressions. This study's narrative and quantitative data show the existence of regular microaggressions within student affairs. Student affairs professionals talked about incidents of everyday racism such as colleagues' "shock" at a professional Person of Color's good performance, or commonly made comments about a Person of Color's appearance, particularly their hair or dress. Another recurrent and troubling motif was when participants' colleagues wrote in session evaluations that their facilitator, a Person of Color, was "overpowering" the White male co-facilitator. These internal incidents have turned professionals on one another when difficult conversations around race and racism emerge.

In this study, People of Color in student affairs commented often that their racial identity is at the forefront of their minds, particularly when they set foot on campus for their work in

student affairs. Fay illuminated, “There is no question that we are served better by people who are empathetic [and compassionate].” White survey respondents indicated they are willing to have conversations and be present to their Colleagues of Color when incidents of racism are impacting them. However, Riley shared that “they [Whites] have to be open and willing to have the conversations and not go around it. People need tools to do that and need to be empathetic in order to do it.” Whites have a hard time with these types of conversations because, according to DiAngelo (2018), “One of the greatest social fears for a White person is being told that something that we have said or done is racially problematic . . . we [White people] often respond with anger and denial” (p. 4). Discussions approached with empathy and understanding will encourage Whites to stay engaged with the topic and not fall back on their fear and retreat from the difficulties of understanding and learning about racism.

The need for, but obstacles to, brave conversations. Participants spoke frequently of the need for continued discussion on difficult matters which can be referred to as *brave conversations*. This emphasis called to mind Arao and Clemens’s (2013) advocating changing from the term “safe spaces” to “brave spaces” (or brave conversations) when discussing sensitive topics. They state:

> By revising our framework [from safe to brave] to emphasize the need for courage rather than the illusion of safety, we better position ourselves to accomplish our learning goals and more accurately reflect the nature of genuine dialogue regarding these challenges and controversial topics (pp. 141–142).

Patton et al. (2007) implore the field of student affairs to better incorporate this type of dialogue on race within our various arenas. Brave conversations require buy-in from all participants and the elimination of social justice shaming and elitism. Arao and Clemens (2013) argue for “controversy with civility” (p. 144) as a mechanism for offsetting the shaming aspect of diversity and social justice work. That phrase, “drawn from the social change model of

leadership development (H. S. Astin & Astin, 1996) . . . frames conflict not as something to be avoided but as a natural outcome in a diverse group" (p. 144). However, there is no way for these conversations to be productive, or even happen at all, if there is no safety for participants, which means the absence of repercussions from their employer as well as from colleagues.

When I contacted student affairs professionals as potential interviewees some were cautious and wanted to see the questions ahead of time, while others were unhesitant and eager to participate, saying, "Yes, I have so much to say on this topic!" I see the generally high enthusiasm as an indicator of pent-up demand for having the much needed and long postponed difficult/brave conversations.

Lee stated, "no one is willing to broach this topic," and Riley concurred that "It's because we are always focused on the student experience, but not [on] what each other are experiencing unless it's within our [racial] 'group." The issues that racism is continually causing for student affairs professionals is a topic that is simply not being discussed regularly, though careers are at risk. Talking about racism as a construct that is damaging individuals and careers, seems to be a formidable task. Study participants agreed with the notion that simply talking about the issue was difficult for our field, and, consequently, they were enthusiastic about sharing their experiences and their thoughts on ways in which the field can be more effective in combating racism.

Fear and insecurity affecting student affairs professionals. There are very real fears among student affairs professionals over job security and a lack of "administrative tenure." These fears derive from experiences student affairs professionals have had particularly when working for "at will" institutions, which are colleges where the employee works fully at the discretion of the administration and can, therefore lose their job without cause at a moment's

notice. This creates a distinct divide between the field of student affairs and the community level of the institution. One survey respondent shared that conflicting messages are sent to student affairs professionals:

> A disconnect [exists] between personal values and the values of the institution. If my values do not align with the institution's then I'm going to either be very uncomfortable in my day-to-day work, or I'm going to be fearful of saying something wrong, speaking my truths, and facing ramifications.

This dichotomy between values and professional obligations creates fear around job security and maintaining a professional career. Survey respondents stated overwhelmingly that job security is needed for them to feel part of creating a racist-free campus community (see Table 4.12). I agree with Patton et al.'s (2007) suggestion that "in order to take a closer step towards eradicating racism on college campuses, student and academic affairs [with the visible support of upper level administrators] need to incorporate dialogues around race" (Patton et al., 2007). However, many student affairs professionals feel they cannot speak out against the perceived oppression, or challenge the responses given by administration, without facing backlash to their position up to and including termination. Nothing inhibits the candor needed for difficult and brave conversation like wondering whether one's job will be on the line.

Because of the lack of administrative tenure and the resulting risks of open advocacy, student affairs professionals are quite adept at keeping quiet publicly while leading students and anti-racist movements from behind-the-scenes. If the university is going to continue working to silence those attempting to create change, then it is up to the field of student affairs to be leaders in those efforts. As Riley stated,

> They [student affairs professionals] need safe and brave spaces to be able to [discuss these issues]; so you have to create those at every level and at every part of the institution. If it is up to student affairs, then we need our leadership to support those spaces.

We still have a long way to go in the ways in which the field, or group level, responds to racism on-campus. Brit felt that the "lack of willingness to engage" is a pervasive challenge in the student affairs field. She continued: "We [at student affairs] are at the point where we don't want to be blamed. 'I didn't cause harm to you' or 'I didn't say that.'" With such day to day silencing of candid discussion and, as a result, the suppression of actions to deal with racism, it is inevitable that employees suffer from chronic stress and burnout.

Stress and burnout within the field. The negative consequences, especially for People of Color working in student affairs of the inability to speak out and oppose both microaggressions and more obvious overt racism is, inevitably, stress and burnout. Another usually unspoken truth reflected on by the focus group participants is that many experience burnout (Paradies, 2006). Too often colleagues have stated that they feel "burnt out" with the work of responding to incidents or facing microaggressions on a daily basis, or simply do not feel valued and will leave their institution in search of a better experience. One such participant, Serena, stated this bluntly:

> I had to take time away from work. I eventually took medical leave because my counselor at the time told me I was not doing well physically, mentally or emotionally and it was all attributed to workplace trauma. This trauma was all rooted around racial distrust, overt and specific acts of racism. My hope was to take time away, figure out how to cope with it and return, but that didn't happen. I ended up taking medical leave and then resigning.

The African American male focus group participant stated that since our last conversation in November 2017, he had been more "worn out" by racism on his campus than he had ever before experienced. He shared with the group that this has become so "tiresome" and has caused him to update his resume and begin looking for new opportunities. He remains committed to student affairs but expressed that he "can no longer work in his current capacity" and needs a change of scene in the field.

Racism is often not talked about on college campuses unless there *is* an "incident" and then student affairs professionals are called upon to respond. Study interviewees specifically focused on this conundrum; those most likely to be hurt by the incident due to a disproportionately high degree of diversity in student affairs offices are also called upon as "experts" at handling these situations. About half of the numbers of student affairs professionals nationally are non-White (Parnell, 2016). White administrators and student affairs professionals often look to their Black/African American counterparts to "deal with" the issue at-hand and provide support to the students; thus, potentially ignoring or being oblivious to the pain that those colleagues may themselves be experiencing. The likelihood that these incidents have a greater impact on student affairs professionals as opposed to other administrators, is high. Student affairs professionals have daily contact with students and because of their intermediary positions they often serve as a buffer between the student body and higher-level administrators. Christina spoke of her role in supporting students through difficult times and shared, "my support is behind the scenes and I often am concerned about any fallout it may have on my position if I'm seen in 'opposition' of 'the university' system." The close connection student affairs professionals have with students adds to the emotional and moral strain caused by incidents of racism. Doane (2003) and DiAngelo (2018) point to the moral tension issue that study participants noted in their narrative responses.

Student affairs graduate programs as a locus of racism—and change. Participants throughout this study brought up and discussed repeated racial offenses in social media spaces as well as within the classrooms of graduate programs and in their day-to-day work. One interviewee spoke about the fear of some graduate students entering the field of student affairs

never having explored their own biases and privileges and, therefore, end up "wreaking havoc" on their students due to this absence of critical abilities and awareness.

Riley approached his qualitative interview as a Black man very hopeful for the ways in which student affairs can be leaders on-campus when it comes to addressing issues of racism and systemic oppression. Near the end of his interview, as he was reflecting on the close to two hours we spent together, he shared:

> So, I think student affairs should indeed lead the way. But they have to do the self-work first, and then all of that will influence the marketing, how admissions approaches their work, all of that kind of stuff will come.

After pausing a moment, he continued:

> If no one else is willing to step out there to do that, if administration and the university isn't equipped to do it, then we are essentially placing the burden of that work on our students. I think as student affairs professionals it is our duty to understand ourselves well enough to be able to work together not in opposition to university systems, but in support of breaking down those systems that have oppressed people for so long.

Systemic Nature of Racism on Academic Campuses (Community Level)

The study findings provide further evidence for the systemic nature of racism at the organization level on academic campuses. Racism is an everyday reality in the lives of People of Color in this study, consistent with Essed's (1991) exposition of "everyday racism." Racism's impact is compounded by the inability of White individuals to even recognize the racist nature of the system that they are a part of; this failure to recognize historically privileged roles perpetuates racialized ideals at the expense of People of Color (Picca & Feagin, 2007).

This study's data confirm that racism is alive and well in our contemporary collegiate environments. A high percentage—85.3%—of survey respondents were aware of, had heard about, or witnessed acts of racism on their campus. The study also showed that over 77% of the

African American survey respondents and over 70% of "Other Persons of Color," had personally experienced incidents of racism on campus.

My findings will not shock those who study and assess contemporary campuses. Yet, it is important to confirm and name the dynamic that still goes on and, to a large extent, defines the day-to-day experience that student affairs professionals, and the students they serve, must confront. To give context and continuity to this, I would touch briefly on educational system history.

The college system was developed as an elite institute catering to the needs of rich, Christian, (young) men of European descent, who were seen as the future leaders and model citizens of society (Thelin, 2011). Thus, inherent in its origins, the university has sustained White privilege (Anderson, 2002; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Tate, 1997). Study participants named this phenomenon and structure of racial inequality. For example, Brit, one of the participants, commented that, "upper administrators are so slow to respond because they are concerned with protecting the very system that they are a part of." Similarly, a survey respondent stated: "Oftentimes I do not feel comfortable in the work place simply because of how it *feels* to be a Person of Color on this campus."

Because the educational system was designed and built by the majority culture without critical reflection on the racial implications, it continues to be maintained through a White majority perspective. Accessing higher education is still a privileged process (Guinier, 2016). Brit stated:

> Simply going to school as a young person is a system. Being able to take a test is a system. Getting into college and succeeding is a system. The ways in which colleges are set-up, is a system. It's all a system and *most* of those systems are not set-up to help People of Color.

Unfortunately, as one survey respondent pointed out,

> Student affairs, as a field, likes to say it is committed to diversity, but falls short on the work needed to be effective. We work hard to maintain the systems in place that disenfranchise folks and are constantly creating new systems [that are not inclusive].

This element seemed to weave its way throughout this study as many participants spoke about how student affairs plays into the system of oppression on-campus. Lee offered that it is time for colleges and universities to not only recognize the White structures that are perpetuating this type of campus environment, but for countervailing action by leadership. He stated:

> Individually, and kind of more within our divisions, I think we need to be having more conversations about Whiteness and White supremacy and really looking at the individual behaviors and actions that continue those systems and that allow those systems to be perpetuated.

Even at identity-serving institutions like Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) or Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), power and privilege work in tandem to maintain certain structures. Tamara, referring to her student affairs work at an HBCU in the South, explained: "Racism is as much a part of our culture as when I worked at a predominantly White institution. Sure, the *culprits* and the *methods* are different, but there is still a hierarchy that is served and supported by racialized systems."

Several additional key subthemes emerged from this study about the systemic presence of racism within universities:

- lack of resources committed to counter racism and support Staff and Faculty of Color,
- tokenistic reliance on People of Color,
- incident response rather than proactive planning, and
- doubts that liberation from racism is even possible.

Lack of resources to counter racism and support Staff and Faculty of Color. Consistent with the historically systemic nature of racism, study participants identified the lack of resources provided by the institution for supporting and retaining Staff and Faculty of Color, as endemic. Riley stated:

> It is one thing to have Faculty of Color in, say, Africana Studies, but it is another thing to have a Faculty Member of Color who is persisting through a tenure-track position. Persistence requires resources and support and promotional opportunities.

Without necessarily elaborating on specifically what resources are needed, some did comment critically that upper level administrators simultaneously relied on student affairs professionals to respond to incidents of racism occurring on campus while not meeting resource requirements. Tamara stated in her interview:

> We [fellow Colleagues of Color and her] cannot continue to be the only ones who care enough to push back on this issue. We need resources that include financial support as well as human resources in the respect of allies, who are willing to 'go there' with us and be agents of change.

Tokenistic reliance on People of Color. Henry and Tator (2009) noted that until People of Color are in positions within the university structure where their experiences can be central, the ideals of a racism-free university setting will not be fully realized. This study showed that while People of Color have filtered into some professional administrative positions, as Lee stated, "[they are] still oftentimes seen as a number, or something that looks good in the publications for the university." Denise, responding in the focus group, concurred, noting that "students [often] will ask am I *the* 'diversity on the campus' which will make me ponder the same question as a professional staff member."

Incident response rather than proactive planning. Consistent with Harper and Patton's (2007) designation of race being only "treated as an eruptive topic that gets talked about when some major crisis occurs on campus" (p. 1), the participants shared that universities only discuss

the climate of their campus when crisis situations arise. Furthermore, Park (2011) insinuated that universities sweep such incidents under the rug to save face. When university leaders appraise the legalities of urgent situations, they may realize that the university actually has no other clear position or stance to possibly take. Gusa (2010) described the ways that campuses allow such "respond to, not plan" behavior to persist which, in turn, perpetuates an unwelcoming climate.

Rather than focusing on the systemic nature of racism and the implication that only systemic rather than crisis response will allow for preparedness and prevention, colleges and universities tend to react to incidents as isolated phenomena. When incidents of racism actually occur on campus, almost inevitably, there is an outcry amongst students for administration to "do something"—do something either to the perpetrators (if identified) or do something systemically so that the very *thought* of committing these acts is no longer prevalent. Racism will always remain just an "incident" if it is not recognized or responded to by the administration as being a symptom of the full systemic structure that their universities were built on. Fay, in reference to her position as a dean of students, spoke to this phenomenon:

> My only role, it seems, is to "clean up" the mess of these kinds of incidents. I do not feel as though I have enough . . . political clout to be a real change agent. Part of that is "the system" of higher education; but a bigger part of that is the "system" of racism and how it plays out on a college campus.

Data from the survey (see Table 4.12) speak to this need. Almost a quarter of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that systems are in place to address and respond to incidents of racism in a timely manner. The fact that more than 60% see current systems as adequate may be an even more telling statistic of concern, given how common it is during serious racism incidents for confusion to reign. As demonstrated throughout this study, student affairs professionals look to the university to create and support safe spaces for all people—and doing this primarily as ad hoc reactions to incidents rather than a planned way, cannot achieve that.

Doubts that liberation from racism is even possible. This theme was at once among the most depressing to emerge during data-gathering, yet also an area with signs of being transformable. The focus group was asked to reflect on the question of whether or not liberation from racism was possible on a college campus. Each participant agreed that liberation, in its purest form, was probably not possible. People who make up a university community are products of the racialized environments they live in, elements of which they bring to work as well, including different values, upbringings, expectations and outlooks on life. Leaders must be willing to not only name these systems publicly and in the clearest of terms, but also work to construct actionable steps that can chip away at the systems and the despair about changing them. Student affairs professionals can be a part of this progress at the university level. When asked in follow-up emails about what they would do if given the support to address these issues holistically on their campus, Riley responded with the following pathway:

> Personally, I don't believe the "experts" [student affairs professionals] are the ones who can truly affect change. Too often, universities assemble "Diversity Committees" with all the people who care about social justice at the university. What ultimately happens is they collect data and try to convince the leadership of the institution that these issues matter. Instead, I think we need to take a top-down approach. If the Vice Chancellor/President approached me to create a "dream team" for creating a national model for a racism-free learning environment, I would invite the upper-level administration (including members of the Board of Trustees), to form a racial justice coalition. The work of this coalition would primarily be self-work, unlearning the entrenched racism that they and others like them have allowed to permeate the institution since its creation. Given that most of them would [likely] be White, the curriculum would focus heavily on Critical Whiteness studies and critical race theory. The group would meet on a weekly basis, exploring stories and case studies related to racism at the institution. The group would learn about the history of racism and Whiteness embedded in the institution. Additionally, the group would critically examine institutional policies and infrastructures, identifying the ways in which the institution upholds White supremacy from the ground up. Each member of the group would identify ways in which they can implement racial justice efforts in their area of the institution and the ways in which they can engage their staff and students in combating White supremacy. At the end of each meeting, each member of the group would commit to at least one action that they would make to combat White supremacy at the

> institution in the coming week. This group would be an ongoing responsibility and a priority in the job responsibilities for each member.

Both Lee and Denise concurred greatly with this approach as an ideal "way forward." The overall feeling within the focus group space ultimately was cautious optimism that moderated initial reflections about racism's inevitability.

Summary of Main Challenges of Addressing Campus Racism

Two major challenges were brought up at various times during the study and on which it is necessary to comment here. One that several qualitative interviews surfaced was the effect of a change in national leadership following the 2016 presidential election. Another recurrent theme was how recent changes in federal rules and regulations impacted the campus climate.

Acknowledging the effect of change in national leadership. There is no question that the timing of this study had an impact on outcomes. The election of Donald Trump in November 2016 was mentioned by participants in every phase of the study, and has spawned many new challenges on college campuses across the United States of America. These challenges include First Amendment (free speech) rights on campus, the rise of White nationalist protests on university properties, as well as the proliferation of racist acts (Kerr, 2018). Although racism on a college campus has certainly been inherently present throughout the history of the U.S. education system (Drakeford, 2015), the expressed feelings of student affairs professionals is that the degree to which these incidents happen has increased manifold.

The impact of college climate of how to deal with racism. In recent years, Federal Government changes in rules and regulations relating to higher education have altered the nature of the college climate. Working on a college campus today is akin to navigating a marathon race in which the rules and the route change constantly. For example, rules and regulations regarding investigating complaints of sexual misconduct (Title IX. Education Amendments Act of 1972)

have changed drastically in the past decade, swinging from a primary focus on sports team equality and the mishandling of sexual misconduct on campus, to colleges and universities requiring annual training and mandatory reporting training for all faculty and staff (Samsel, 2017). Regulations governing accommodations for students with registered needs, academic or not, have also gone through many challenges and changes over the past decade. Many of these changes are sound and are designed to respond to the changing demographics of our students. Other regulations such as the handling of free speech and First Amendment rights on campus, have proven to be much trickier to navigate (Chokshi, 2018). Recently, on my home campus a well-known White supremacist attempted to book a space to hold an event. He was certainly well within his rights and the university had no legal threshold with which to bar his speaking engagement. This admission enraged the campus community even after the university president put out numerous email messages and devoted an entire website to his visit.

Limitations of the Study

There are three areas of limitations in this study: more qualitative interviews were needed; a focus group with more diverse identities represented was needed; and the voice of upper level administration was missing.

Limited diversity of interviewees. Twelve qualitative interviews were conducted for this study starting with five participants known to the researcher. As is well known, and almost by definition, qualitative studies do not usually aim for interview numbers that would allow rigorous testing of hypotheses (McMillan & Wergin, 2010). The number of participants in this study falls within the typical range recommended by those who have written and reflected on the question of sample size for interviewing (Boddy, 2016; Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). Of course, although many themes were repeated by survey and focus group participants, several more

interviews would have better ensured broader representation and reaching saturation. The interviewees included African American/Black and Asian-American identified individuals but lacked Latino, Middle Eastern, and Native American/Indigenous representation. The lack of more diversity among the interviewees was partially mitigated by the diverse group of survey participants.

Conducting interviews on this particular topic, and asking participants to share intimate stories about discomfort, shame, guild, hurt or pain, was not a small request. What the request triggered will never be known for sure. Fact is that many participants who declined to be interviewed either cited a lack of time or interest in the topic, or simply did not respond to inquiries. As stated below, the experiences of research impact on participants can be tremendous and, depending on the participant, might have been only compounded by the dominant social identities of the researcher.

Limited diversity and number of focus group participants. The focus group initially consisted of four participants, however, one Woman of Color was unable to participate due to illness. The final focus group consisted of one Woman of Color, one Man of Color, and two White men, including the researcher. A more diverse focus group might have broadened the conversation. This number falls below the optimum recommended in studies and manuals for design of focus group research (see Tang & Davis, 1995, for a discussion of key factors in deciding how many participants to include). Another diverse perspective could have enriched the level of the discussion and taken the conversation to different places. With more time and resources available it would also have been desirable to have more replications of focus groups (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011).

Missing voice of upper level administrators. This study was able to obtain thoughts and reflections from a wide variety of position titles as well as years of service, however, there were no participants identified at a vice president level or higher. Thus, the study lacked any substantial representation from upper level administrators. One qualitative interview was held with a dean of students; however, as demonstrated throughout this chapter, the decision makers of a university are the high-ranking officials and board of trustee members. One survey respondent commented that the survey "missed the opportunity to get the voice of administration"—and that is certainly an area limiting this study. Focusing on these upper level leaders would be a desirable companion study to mine, one to be considered in framing future research.

Experiences of research impact on participants. Storytelling has the ability to be therapeutic and liberating when the listener is fully trusted as one who can understand, and when the situation feels "safe." Revisiting experiences can also be painful and challenging. Focus group participants shared that they spent a great deal of time in reflection after their qualitative interview with me. One participant went through experiences of re-victimization and sheer anger towards the topic and questions being asked. Two Participants of Color reflected on whether or not their responses, or the ways in which they responded, would have been different had the researcher been a Person of Color. One felt he likely would have shared the same reflections and stories, however the *ways* in which he shared them, or the language used, likely would have been different. Another explained that even though there was a bit of familiarity between herself and the White male researcher, there was an element of guardedness in her responses. Finally, regardless of their racial identity, the two men who participated in the focus group felt they were able to "cut off" from the questioning easier and move about their day quicker than, perhaps,

their female counterparts. Regardless of color, every male participant in the qualitative interviews and focus groups simply stated “looked good” thanked me for sharing the transcripts or wished me well on my journey. Women of Color, however, pointed to the many challenges they had faced in the conversation. Did this have to do with a more profoundly felt history of voice denial among Black women? Was it the positional distance between Women of Color navigating multiple marginalized identities while sharing their experiences with someone with multiple dominant identities? In retrospect, I had underestimated the impact this could have on the interview situation. The workings of intersectionality, as referenced by Crenshaw’s work (1991), seemed to play out more explicitly for Women of Color in this study, but also more consciously in relation to my own experience of this research. It demanded that I re-visit my own experiences and expectations in the course of and in the aftermath of the interviews.

Apparently, in this project I did create a challenge for interviewing Participants of Color, women in particular, which touches upon “on the spot” research ethics that went beyond the approved IRB only (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). Often socialized to be the “caretakers” of others, women expressed that they felt as though they were once again “taking care” of a White man who wanted to ask intimate questions regarding their experiences (Kobayashi, 2009).

Serena explained that although she knew my intentions were sound, simply recalling those stories took a tremendous toll on her. This unintended damage is a something I have to live with. The situation reinforces the stress and psychological damage racism can cause to People of Color (Paradies, 2006). Since that initial interview, Serena and I have had many, I would like to believe, positive interactions and she has inquired as to the status of the dissertation. Being a doctoral student herself, we have shared the many ups and downs associated with tackling sensitive topics and the ways in which we can support our participants.

Tamara acknowledged that not knowing me personally, she held back a bit out of a fear of not fully trusting how she would be represented. Brit emailed back after reading her transcripts and shared that re-reading her own words was very difficult. Upon reading just a few pages of the transcript she had to put it down and step away. She wrote "damn, Trent, I didn't anticipate reading my own words to hit me like this. I'm sorry but I can't finish but I trust you."

Finally, I was deeply impacted by the consequences of the interview for Denise. We had finished our interview with a hug and well wishes. As I drove home from our interview in quiet contemplation from what I perceived as gifts of learning she had shared with me, I received a phone call. She was upset. Denise said to me,

> Trent, I know you, I trust you, there's only one strand that keeps us from not being related, but I still left that conversation feeling like I've been through it again, you know? And I know that wasn't intentional, but it just, because the content, I couldn't avoid feeling like I've relived some of it.

We spoke for two hours processing the conversation. Once I was over the shame and done apologizing, I collected myself and accepted her critique as the ultimate gift. But it was also a racially fraught gift as it expressed how she had been threading carefully around what DiAngelo (2018) has called "White fragility." In spite of her own hurt, she was still educating me. I had colluded in a system that has been set-up for my benefit at the expense of her and in that sense had reinforced the inequalities resulting from (gendered) everyday racism (Essed, 1991). Lorde (1984) sums up this phenomenon perfectly by stating that People of Color

> are expected to educate White people as to our humanity . . . the oppressors maintain their position and evade their responsibility for their own actions. There is a constant drain of energy which might be better used in redefining ourselves and devising realistic scenarios for altering the present and constructing the future. (p. 115)

This reality, however, should not impede a search for truth and a persistence for illuminating a problem within the field of student affairs that has not been adequately addressed.

If I had the opportunity to start over knowing *how* my positionality would enter the conversation and the impact on my participants, I would have done two things differently: first, I would have stated more transparently the purpose of the study, which was to reveal and understand rather than to develop a concrete action plan. Second, I would have ensured that there was adequate time for reflection on the process with the participants afterwards, and offered any additional support structures that they may have needed post-interview. The interviews simply concluded with turning the recorder off, thanking the participant for their time, and offering a timeline for sending their transcripts for review. There was a lack of sensitivity *in the moment* to their gifts of stories and experiences that was clouded by my White skin privilege and my need to "move on" to the next phase of the research process.

Summary Recommendations for the Practice

Focus group participants agreed that a study such as this should not simply end with a "this is what was found" discussion. It is necessary to take the next step into calls for action. Accordingly, the following recommendations are based on the preceding discussion on findings at each level from the student affairs professional through to the university-wide community.

Recommendations at the level of the individual. At the most basic level, individuals need to educate themselves on their racial identities, their perceived power and privileges, and how their racial identities interact and impact others around them.

- Provide opportunities for promoting and supporting self-care.
- Encourage individual reflection about important questions such as, for Whites who have Persons of Color reporting to you, what types of dynamics are you putting into place to create an atmosphere conducive for staff to turn to you in a time of need? What type of self-work have you completed to educate yourself and, what are you

doing as a leader to provide, support, and amplify your staff's ability to seek out and exercise self-care?

- Take steps to curtail elitism and shaming.

Recommendations at the level of the group. The field needs to continue to educate White student affairs professionals who are critically aware of and have skills at countering racism.

- ***Work to update and improve graduate student affairs programs***. Most of the educational theories that student affairs programs are based on were developed by White men in the 1960s whose thinking reflected the primacy of masculinity, the dominance of European intellectuals, and the normativity of the White, male, middle class student. Student affairs, as a professional field, has an opportunity to shift that narrative and center more of their work around stories and experiences of people and students not previously studied (Patton et al., 2007).
- ***Dialogue as a form of ally-ship and healing*.** Co-healers, as participant, Denise, referred to them, need to be present in all spaces on every college campus. And these co-healers should not just be other Colleagues of Color or "woke" White individuals. More dialogue around colleagues' experiences with racism on campus and its impact on their livelihood is needed within the field. These dialogues need to include not just the systemic ways in which racism is impacting higher education and our work, but how it is impacting the way we relate to and support one another in everyday work.
- ***Embrace and promote the need for core competencies***. The field of student affairs needs to embrace the competencies put forth by our national organizations (American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel

Administrators, 2010) around social justice and inclusion and imbed them in all of the work that we do. These competencies need to inform hiring practices, retention efforts of staff, and programming not only for students, but for one another.

Recommendations at the level of the community. At the university/community level there are various ways in which decision makers can be change agents to eliminate the systematic nature of racism and create a more welcoming and inclusive campus environment.

- ***Implement proactive hiring measures and policies***. Campuses should have mandatory training on implicit bias in the hiring process and have structures in-place to support professionals once they are in their roles. Attracting quality candidates and retaining that talent are two very different processes on a college campus. Retaining talent on a college campus can be challenging, particularly if the college campus does not have active policies in-place to address incidents, or the systems that make people feel unwelcome. "[I]f the institution does not make the necessary changes to make the campus climate inclusive, the institution will have a difficult time maintaining diversity" (Hiraldo, 2010).
- ***Work to remove barriers and inhibiting factors and strategies***. The organization level systems present inhibiting factors that work against the change needed for campus constituents. These inhibiting factors include a university system built on Whiteness and the reputation of the institution. These factors have evolved to work together in ways designed to maintain the status quo. If the university/community level is able to name the issues present on their campus, and detail how those issues have played into the systemic racism that the educational system is experiencing, then, progress towards dismantling those systems can begin.

A Visual Model of Racism and Support for Opposing It for Student Affairs Professionals

In this section, I present a "work in progress" intended to capture the main findings and recommendations arising from this study, what the field of student affairs was facing in terms of race and racism on-campus, as well as concepts and themes needing to be addressed to move forward towards establishing solutions. Several participants suggested that such a visual model could be useful in discussion of this complex set of challenges and my initial presentation of the emerging model indicate that it can assist student affairs professionals and upper administration to work together and develop action plans to confronting the campus racism. The model (Figure 5.1) illustrates study findings at the individual, group, and community levels.

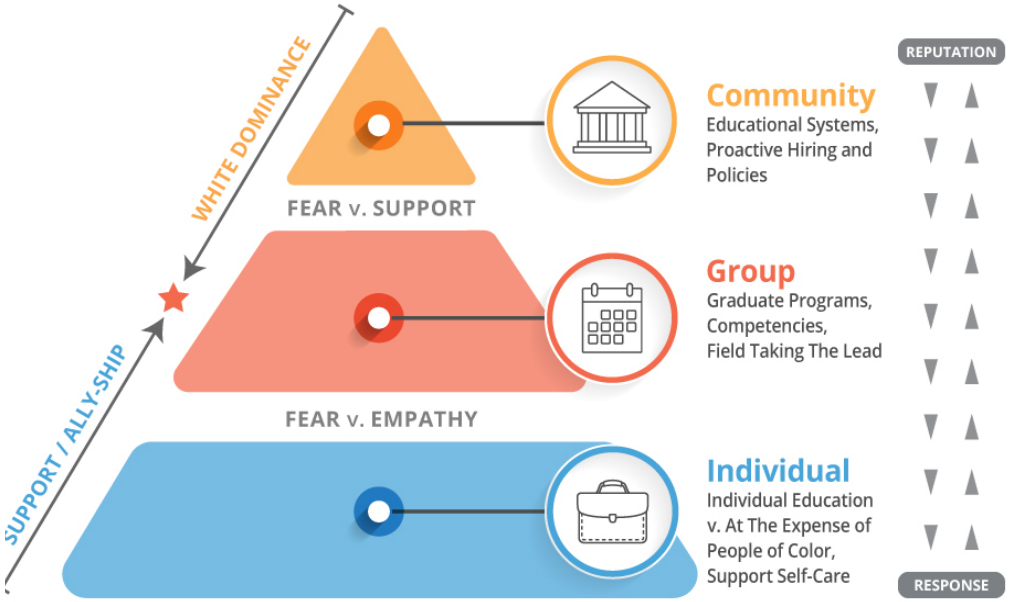

Figure 5.1. Descriptive model of support of student affairs professionals based on this dissertation.

The three levels: Individual, group, and community. Central to the imagery used in this model is the idea of three distinct but interacting levels, as discussed frequently in this dissertation: the individual (blue), that is the student affairs professional her- or himself; the group level (rose color), referring to the collectivity of those working in student affairs across campus; and the community (orange), the university as a whole. For each of these key issues identified in this work are noted to the right of each level in the figure.

At the individual level these are the phenomenon of White student affairs professionals striving for education but calling on People of Color to take the lead in this. Although well-intentioned this may only further delegitimize the experience of People of Color by making the majority narrative the barometer by which all others' experiences are measured and judged. The other thematic issue that arose repeatedly about this level was the need for self-care and support for this amidst the struggles of everyday racism as well as troubling incidents.

At the Group level, the model singles out the challenges of the collectivity of student affairs across campus, taking a lead role in designing and developing graduate training that can build stronger awareness of racial issues and racism in the new generation of professionals, as well as the tool-kit of competencies that are needed to confront and overcome racial discrimination and incidents.

The Community or university-wide level emphasizes the major changes needed in an institution originally designed to educate the White and the privileged; university decision makers can be change agents to eliminate the systematic nature of racism and create a more welcoming and inclusive campus environment. Based on the results here, particular emphasis is placed on the challenge of designing and enacting proactive hiring measures and policies, ones that recognize the different but inter-related challenges of attracting and retaining diversity.

Dichotomies between levels. The visual model also identifies challenges that exist between the three levels. Between the individual and group level, is the issue of *fear versus empathy*. As indicated in the data and discussed about fears rooted in language and in being called out in the shaming and elitism of Whites who think they are "done cookies" impairs the predisposition that student affairs professionals often have to be empathetic and compassionate in countering racism.

Just as fear is a barrier between the individual and group in the realm of language and shaming, fear is as much a barrier between the group and community in the realm of job security and silencing the voice of dissent. I call this inter-layer, *fear versus support*. Here, the very legitimate fears that inhibit the group—the student affairs collectivity—from progress against racism and in support of each other, are affected by support, or lack thereof, at the whole community level. The embedded White privilege values that built most universities in America,

survives in the weakness of support for those who would take more proactive stances against racism, whether in terms of lack of administrative tenure, or silences inadequate responses to racist actions and incidents.

Dichotomous oppositions among all levels. Finally, the model includes two flows or dichotomies intended to capture common understandings among the participants of this study. On the right-hand side of the visual, I portray the *dichotomy of reputation and response*. Simply put, this part of the graphic speaks to the complex interaction between lower levels (individual and group) needing to be the first and steadiest line of response to call out and counteract racism, and the university level's priority of protecting institutional reputation, which, is still seen in terms of the foundational values—a privileged place for educating privileged people. The dilemma which many participants spoke of is that university administrations will often have a priority interest in keeping racial incidents and issues from being publicly known, while progressive student affairs practitioners strive to shine light on these.

On the left side of the visual model, is a related dichotomy juxtaposing *White dominance versus support and ally-ship.* As noted often in the participants' responses in this study, White dominance is an enduring part of many universities' "DNA." The continuing power of this legacy is as described more generally by Essed (1991): "racism is systematically integrated into meanings and routine practices by which social relations are reproduced . . . [it is] the very fabric of the social system" (p. 295). Against this in this model and as noted by some of the participants here, are the forces of support and ally-ship. Respondents in the quantitative survey spoke overwhelmingly about their willingness to be a support person for someone experiencing racism with 71% of respondents saying they have acted as an ally to a person *at least* one time in the past academic year, while Professionals of Color stated unequivocally that they would appreciate

this type of supportive environment. Visualizing such positive enactments as the push back to the still powerful though, today, more insidious White dominancy, calls attention to student affairs professionals and collectivities (groups) on how they need to see their every action as a small part of dismantling the "Euro-American social order . . . taken for granted by the dominant group" (Essed, 1991, p. 296).

As noted, the visual model that I have presented in Figure 5.1 and briefly summarized, is a work in progress, something that derives from my participants (and my own) experience and that can be used as a continuing and evolving stimulus for much needed dialogue among student affairs professionals committed to changing racism and race relations in the university.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are several possible topics this research points to for future research and more encompassing story of the impact of racism—and ways to deal with it—in the field of student affairs.

One area for future research, using the data I have generated here, would be to compare the pervasiveness of racism across different institution types, different regions of the country, and institution sizes. Such a study would require all three data gathering approaches used here—interviews, focus groups, and surveys. This analysis and knowledge could help to focus attention on the factors contributing to variably negative climates and assist administration with the development of action steps.

A second potential future research direction arises from one of the first comments made by focus group participants: the desire to see more ways to quantify and measure racism. One measurement tool, the *Perceived Racism Scale* (McNeilly et al., 1996), seeks to assess the experience of racism in a "multidimensional manner" (p. 154). Campus climate scales have also

been developed and adapted to gain a better understanding of how students are being treated and experiencing college (A. W. Astin, Trevino, & Wingard, 1991), and some colleges and universities develop their own climate surveys for all community members (e.g., Mattice, 1994). However, the potential exists for student affairs divisions to create or adapt such tools to delve into the climate specific for their professionals on their own campus. This would be a shift in the direction of action research whereby a community or institution takes a lead role in formulating and directing research into its own context and dynamic (Kidd & Kral, 2005).

Another potential area for research arose from my participants who noted the apparently greater awareness of verbal and visual acts of racism (images, graffiti) than of action-based racism (fights or physical abuse). Focus group participants posited that this may have been because most people are more aware of verbal and visual acts and, in contrast, do not witness action-based as often. A study to probe this further is warranted.

A final area for future research is into the idea and practice of ally-ship. What does ally-ship look like and mean for People of Color? What are the end-goals for ally-ship amongst White people? It was agreed that more work and research could be done on this particular topic because ally-ship should not, as one participant pointed out, “be [just] a good pat on the back for a White person . . . [ally-ship] needs to be consistent and genuine amongst Communities of Color.”

Positionality Revisited in Light of the Research Experience

Throughout the course of this dissertation study I have attempted to hold on to two truths: I am a cisgender educated White male who holds multiple dominant identities; and I am trying to wrap my head around why racism has had such a tremendous impact on the career field that I love. Second, to understand the impact that racism has had on student affairs professionals, since

it has never directly negatively impacted me, I had to rely on participants' stories to drive the narrative of this study. This topic and this study have been incredibly challenging; however, recounting incidents of racism that participants have experienced, or being targeted by racism, or being driven away from your chosen profession because of racism is an insurmountable feat that I have attempted to honor in this study by centering the very lived experiences that were shared with me.

Digging for the truth to a story or an experience requires persistence. Racism invades from many angles and can blend into any situation. The participants in this study represented racial, gender, variety. But here I want to reflect more deeply on the fact that in this study I have also asked for People of Color to share with me their experiences with racism and to open up to me about how it has impacted their work, livelihoods, and lives. Some appeared to have given freely and not shared that participating in this study was in any way negative. However, others have shared that this conversation was indeed a very big ask of them. This begs the question of the role of researcher in this type of inevitably intrusive work. According to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), "people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas the narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (p. 2). As researcher I was keenly aware of the stories and experiences being shared with me and, as Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggested, needed to be "conscious of the end as the inquiry begins" (p. 7). This process was integral as I reflected on each of the stories after they were shared with me and began to parse and organize elements of each person's narrative to create an overall picture.

Participants certainly knew that their conversations with me were a means to an end—my end. But then what? What happens to their stories long after the transcripts are destroyed, their

recordings have been erased, and the dissertation defended? What is next? How can I continue a relationship with these individuals whereby the stories they shared with me are honored, cherished, and used for good? Knowledge of the "what's next" was missing for many of my participants. And indeed, due to its exploratory nature, this had not been intended to be a Participative Action Research project. I could have been more direct that I was first and foremost trying to reveal student affairs professionals' experiences with campus racism as a way of offering recognition and a platform for further dialogue and conversation. A secondary result of this study is the pursuit of a concrete agenda of change. Perhaps the impact that this study had on some participants would have been lessened had those goals been explicitly shared. At the same time, seeking truth within a topic that has caused so much pain for so many people, is going to be difficult regardless of who the researcher is or how many parameters they have put into place.

Referring back to the story shared in Chapter III, Denise and I have maintained many conversations since her interview for this study. However, Denise's call on my ride home from our interview marked a defining moment. She has inquired as to the progress and model being developed by this work. We have had conversations about the efficacy of studying race as well as what we could possibly work on together to collaborate and connect our research interests. Our lines of communication remain open and our authentic dialogue has assisted in much of the healing needed for this work.

Conclusion

The field of student affairs is in a particularly interesting and strategic position within the university setting. On the one hand, its professionals are attracted to the field due to collective interest in assisting students along their developmental journey. They feel as though they can make an impact on students' lives that will be sustaining. Due to the role, however, they are

often called upon to assist in picking up the messier pieces that come with the work of assisting those students, including experiences with racism that are far too common in higher education. The position student affairs has is one of influence and power when it comes to supporting students. But that power is limited when confronting the impact racism has on the individual student affairs professional and the field in general. Because of our lack of power and the constant competition between the field of student affairs and faculty and administrators, student affairs professionals often feel alone when dealing with this specific issue of racism. If the field of student affairs were to start with a model as suggested above to take inventory of their specific university setting and environment, productive dialogue and progress can be made. I have seen many positive strides in my own institution where a full curriculum around equity and inclusion for student affairs professionals has been developed and administered to five cohorts thus far. This curriculum utilizes individual education, group examinations, and strategy building for the university system. While results may be years away, the conversations have at least started and leaders within our divisions of student affairs are taking a hard look at the ways in which our particular division can positively impact the campus culture while simultaneously supporting one another through our own professional journeys. It is only through our critical self-work, and the painful examination of how our field's espoused values are actually playing out within our field, that we can we truly enact the change in handling racism needed ever more urgently in higher education today.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Invitation Letters to Participants in Phase I Interviews

Invitation email for participants in initial interview round:

Dear Colleague,

My name is Trent Pinto and I am a doctoral student in the Leadership and Change program at Antioch University. I am writing to you today to invite you to participate in my dissertation study looking at the impact of racism on student affairs professionals. As a fellow student affairs professional I have seen that this is an area of concern for many of us. I am interested in speaking with you about your experiences with racism on campus, the impact on your work and professional life, and about the ways in which our field can effectively respond and be supportive of one another when faced with incidents of racism. I anticipate our initial conversation will last about 90 minutes and can be conducted over the phone, in person, or via Skype/Google Hangout. The interview will be recorded and transcribed with your permission and a copy of the transcript will be provided to you prior to inclusion in the study analysis. I will also offer you the opportunity to remain anonymous in the study, provide a pseudonym, as well as an alternative description of your institution should you prefer.

The second phase of the study will consist of a focus group interview with participants who may opt-in from these initial interviews. I will send you follow-up communication regarding this phase of the study. I have received IRB approval from Antioch University. Please email me back if you are interested in participating. I will then work with you to determine the best means of holding the interview and sharing the required consent form.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this important study. I understand the potentially sensitive nature of the study as well as the emotions that can be elicited from speaking on this topic. My goal is to represent your voice and experiences to the best of my abilities and to use your voice and experiences as the driving force of the study.

Sincerely yours,

Trent Pinto

Appendix B: Invitation Letters to Participants for Focus Group

Dear Colleague,

My name is Trent Pinto and I am a doctoral student in the Leadership and Change program at Antioch University. I am writing to you today to invite you to participate in my dissertation study looking at the impact of racism on student affairs professionals. As a fellow student affairs professional I have seen that this is an area of concern for many of us. I am interested in speaking with you about your experiences with racism on campus, the impact on your work and professional life, and about the ways in which our field can effectively respond and be supportive of one another when faced with incidents of racism. I anticipate our initial conversation will last about 90 minutes and can be conducted over the phone, in person, or via Skype/Google Hangout. The interview will be recorded and transcribed with your permission and a copy of the transcript will be provided to you prior to inclusion in the study analysis. I will also offer you the opportunity to remain anonymous in the study, provide a pseudonym, as well as an alternative description of your institution should you prefer.

The second phase of the study will consist of a focus group interview with participants who may opt-in from these initial interviews. I will send you follow-up communication regarding this phase of the study. I have received IRB approval from Antioch University. Please email me back if you are interested in participating. I will then work with you to determine the best means of holding the interview and sharing the required consent form.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this important study. I understand the potentially sensitive nature of the study as well as the emotions that can be elicited from speaking on this topic. My goal is to represent your voice and experiences to the best of my abilities and to use your voice and experiences as the driving force of the study.

Sincerely yours,

Trent Pinto