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The "Essence" from within: A Phenomenological Study examining the Lived Experiences of Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women (RAEMW) Senior Level Administrators at 4-year Predominately White Institutions (PWIS) in the United States (U.S.)

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THE "ESSENCE" FROM WITHIN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY EXAMINING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIZED WOMEN (RAEMW) SENIOR LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS AT 4-YEAR PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTIONS (PWIS) IN THE UNITED STATES (U.S.)

by

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Dedications

First, I dedicate this work to all of my ancestors whose shoulders I stand on today. I am my ancestor's wildest DREAMS come true! Second, I dedicate this work to three strong women, my late mother Vera Theresa Crockett and my late grandmothers Odessa Vera Robinson and Mary Nell May, who would have been so proud to see the work I have accomplished! Third, I dedicate this to my mentor Dr. Alberta "Tamika" Quick who has inspired this study and who has shown me from near and far what a true mentor, leader, mother, and administrator can and should be! Fourth, I dedicate this to my four godchildren: Kameron, Kaleb, Makayla, and Ja'liyah! I also dedicate this work to my family! I hope this inspires you all to be unapologetically yourself and to follow your passions and dreams! Always remember that you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you! (Philippians 4:13) Lastly, I would like to dedicate this work in the memory of Dr. Antoinette Candia-Bailey, who sadly was a victim of the injustice that racial and ethnic minoritized women administrators encounter on a daily basis.

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First, I want to give honor to God who is the head of my life because without him none of this would be possible! This journey has been filled with peaks and valleys, but God's strength helped me to make it to the end. I am the answered prayer of my ancestors! To my family...thank you for your love and support! To my siblings (Lukiana, Pernell, James, and Trunice) and my best friends (Shonté and Tina) you all inspire me to keep pushing! To my mentor Dr. Tamika Quick, thank you for seeing my potential and always pushing me to take it to the next level. To my church family, my AKA Sorors, my PCCC family, and some amazing women in my cohort (you know who you are) thank you for all your support! To Ashley (future Dr. Castiglia), thank you for your motivation and support; I will forever cherish our friendship (even if you end up counting cups lol). Lastly, to my fiancé, Irving, thank you for being there for my ups and downs and for always reminding me how smart I am and that everything will be all right! I love you always!

To my dissertation committee… my chair Dr. MaryBeth Walpole, Dr. Cecile Sam, and Dr. Susan Browne, thank you for your support, guidance, and encouragement during this process! To Dr. Walpole, you have been on this journey with me since I was a master's student and have provided countless opportunities for me to develop as a scholarly researcher and a lifelong learner. You have made me a better writer, researcher, and scholar and I cannot thank you enough. Many thanks to all my phenomenal participants your accolades speak for themselves, and I hope will inspire others to chase their dreams! You have allowed this young Black girl to experience her own BLACK GIRL MAGIC moment! I have come this far by faith, and this is only the beginning!

Abstract

Felicia M. Crockett
THE "ESSENCE" FROM WITHIN: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY
EXAMINING THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC
MINORITIZED WOMEN (RAEMW) SENIOR LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS AT 4-
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STATES (U.S.)
2023-2024
MaryBeth Walpole, Ph.D.
Doctor of Philosophy in Education

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of senior level RAEMW administrators who work at 4-year PWIs in the U.S. and analyze the impact of institutional environments on their success. The theories that guided this study were: Crenshaw's (1994; 1989; 2015) intersectionality framework and four tenets of CRT which include counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, interest convergence, and intersectionality (Hiraldo, 2010, 2019). This study was guided by the three research questions: 1) How do RAEMW senior level administrators describe their experiences navigating higher education, 2) How do senior level RAEMW administrators describe the impact of institutional environments on their career advancement in higher education, and 3) How can intersectionality, counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, and interest convergence inform research on RAEMW's experiences as senior level administrators? Seven senior level RAEMW administrators participated in the study. Data was collected through virtual interviews and the data analysis procedures were conducted using Moustakas' (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method. Three themes emerged that captured their lived experiences as RAEMW senior level administrators: 1) The Power of Identity, 2) Daily Indignities as Barrier to Advancement, and 3) Communities of Support and Success Strategies that Promotes Boundary Setting.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

We are a society that has been structured from the top and bottom by race. You don't get beyond that by deciding not to talk about it anymore. It will always come back; it will always reassert itself over and over again. (Crenshaw, 2015)

The U.S. is a nation divided by race (Chesler et al., 2005). Higher education institutions have been experiencing racist issues on campuses and are starting to come to terms with their racist institutional histories (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). That racist history continues to reverberate today in lower retention and graduation rates for Black and Latinx students compared to White and Asian students (U.S. Department of Education et al., 2016). Higher education institutions have responded to the issues of low retention and graduation rates, in part, by focusing on recruiting more women and minoritized faculty members who look like their minoritized students to diversify the faculty (Smith et al., 2004; Tuitt et al., 2007). Diversifying the faculty helps create a comfortable institutional environment for racial and ethnic minoritized students to work in and faculty with whom they can work with (Collins & Kritsonis, 2006; Smith et al., 2004; Tuitt et al., 2007). Faculty have a great deal of interaction with students; students should relate to them (Collins & Kritsonis, 2006). While faculty diversification has been a focus for institutions, these institutions of higher education have paid less attention to the diversification of their administrative ranks (Austin, 1984; Logue & Anderson, 2001; Milliken, 1990).

Administrators, like faculty, also have substantial contact with students. The diversity among administrators adds to creating a comfortable environment for all students, improving their experiences, and providing opportunities for networking, mentorship, and leadership development for racial and ethnic minoritized students. Administrators also shape policies, influence budget allocation, create hiring practices, and can ensure that they are equitable (Austin, 1984; Doyle, 2020; Golde, 2019; Luedke, 2017; U. S. Department of Education et al., 2016). However, women are underrepresented as administrators, and racial and ethnically minoritized women are especially underrepresented. While there is a growing body of research on minoritized faculty because of efforts to diversify the faculty (Brems et al., 1994; Clance & Imes, 1978; Jarmon, 2014; McChesney, 2018; Turner, 2002; Turner et al., 2008; Walkington, 2017), there is little research related to minoritized administrators, and research on Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women (RAEMW) is especially scarce (Aguirre, 2000; Menges & Exum, 1983; Solorzano et al., 2000; Turner, 2002). RAEMW are defined as "groups that are different in race, religious creed, nation of origin, sexuality, and gender and as a result of social constructs have less power or representation compared to other members or groups in society" (Smith, 2016, p. 5). In this dissertation, RAEMW senior-level administrators at U.S. 4-year PWIs are the focus, specifically Asian, Black, and Latinx women who may also identify as biracial.

U.S. Women in Higher Education

RAEMW administrators are underrepresented and under-researched, in part, because of the history of U.S. higher education (Dunn et al., 2014; Pritchard et al., 2019; Teague, 2015; Whitford, 2020). When higher education in the U.S. began, access was

limited to White men. Although some Native Americans were admitted to the early colleges, women and other minoritized people were excluded from higher education (Turner, 2002). Women at higher education institutions have been discriminated against, marginalized, and treated unfairly in academia starting as early as the colonial era (Cohen & Kisher, 2010; Nidiffer, 2002; Solomon, 1985). Women's exclusion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ended when White women gained access to higher education institutions in 1833, which was about 200 years after the founding of Harvard College (Chamberlain, 1991; Cohen & Kisher, 2010; Morison, 1995). However, Black women did not gain access to college in the U.S. until 1841 when Oberlin College began granting bachelor's degrees to Black women (Key Events in Black Higher Education, n.d.; Oberlin History, n.d). During the Civil War, the decline in male student enrollments made higher education institutions more willing to admit women (Harwarth et al., 1997). After the Civil War, colleges and universities focused on the education of Black students, and institutions were specifically created for Black women such as Bennett College in 1873 and Spelman College in 1881 (Thomas & Jackson, 2007). Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), specifically historically Black women's colleges and women's colleges have had a tremendous impact on Black women's lives (Zamani, 2003).

While White and Black women gained access in the 19th century, the climate in which they were received was "chilly" (Nidiffer, 2001, 2002) and the faculty and administrators remained exclusively White men (Pritchard et al., 2019). University leaders functioned as gatekeepers to faculty and administrative positions and enforced classism, racism, and sexism (Nidiffer, 2002). The preservation of classism, racism, and

sexism has contributed to the small numbers of women administrators and even smaller number of RAEMW administrators currently working at colleges and universities in the U.S. (Benjamin, 1997; Teague, 2015; Whitford, 2020).

Higher Education Administrators

When women were admitted to colleges, colleges began to hire women to assist with their educational experiences. A new position, Dean of women, was created, and in 1918 it became the first professional position for women in higher education (Nidiffer, 2002; Schwartz, 1997). The women in these positions had two goals; to create a new professional identity and improve the quality of women students' experiences (Nidiffer, 2001, 2002). The professional practices for higher education administration and student affairs were created by Deans of women (Schwartz, 1997). Additionally, the Dean of women's positions were the catalysts to women gaining administrative positions in higher education. However, as co-education became more commonplace, the Dean of women's positions were phased out and the Dean of Students position, held almost exclusively by men, began addressing the concerns of both male and female students.

Historically, lower-ranking positions in higher education such as librarian, financial aid director, and registrar have been held by women (Austin, 1984; Kaplan & Tinsley, 1989; Simms, 2018; Twale, 1992). Yet while higher education administrators oversee college or university departments, faculty, staff, curricula, facilities, budgets, and programs (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018; Logue & Anderson, 2001), the percentage of RAEMW who hold senior level administrative positions is lower than entry-level leadership positions and has been the focus of limited research (Teague, 2015; Whitford, 2020). The fact is that racial and ethnic minoritized students are not successful enough.

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Diverse faculty are hired in part to support the success of students. Administrators should also be thought of as supporting student success, so it is important to have diverse administrators as well. There is less research on administrators and little research on RAEMW administrators. While there is not much research on these specific groups of women administrators, there has been research on these women as students and faculty.

Thus, it is important to look at the research on RAEMW in other roles in higher education, such as RAEMW students and faculty, as that research is the steppingstone for the research on RAEMW administrators (Brems et al., 1994; Cokley et al., 2017; Edwards, 2019; Jarmon, 2014; McChesney, 2018; Solorzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2009; Turner, 2002; Walkington, 2017; Wei et al., 2020). Research on women administrators examined the importance of support and the barriers they experience in administrative positions (Sederberg & Mueller, 1992). Barriers discussed included hierarchical ones (access, degrees, and certifications), advancement, and balance (work and family) (Sederberg & Mueller, 1992). Racial and ethnic minoritized students and faculty, though, share similar barriers and experiences that may be helpful in exploring RAEMW administrators' experiences.

RAEMW Students and Faculty Experiences

Much has been learned from the research on RAEMW's experiences as students and faculty, and so it is critical to explore that research and its implications for research on RAEMW administrators (Aguirre, 2000; Menges, 1983; Solorzano et al., 2000; Turner, 2002). Both RAEMW students and faculty experience racial microaggressions (Solorzano et al., 2000), which are subtle insults directed toward minoritized people,

often instinctively or unconsciously (Solorzano et al., 2000; Sue et al., 2009). In addition to encountering microaggressions, RAEMW students remain underrepresented and experience discrimination on campus; lack access to resources; endure hostile campus climates; and experience isolation, tokenism, and imposter syndrome (Cokley et al., 2017; Edwards, 2019; Walkington, 2017; Wei et al., 2020). Even at the graduate level, racial and ethnic minoritized students experience isolation and tokenism, are the spokespeople for minoritized groups, and are often viewed as diversity educators for their White peers (Flower & Howard-Hamilton, 2002; Harris & Linder, 2018; Linder et al., 2015; Perez et al., 2019). RAEMW faculty, like students, share similar experiences.

Research on faculty also focused on their representation in higher education; disparities in salary, promotion, and prestige; discrimination experienced on campus from students and colleagues; lack of access to resources; hostile campus climates; isolation; and tokenism (Jarmon, 2014; McChesney, 2018; Turner, 2002; Walkington, 2017). Asian, Black, and Latinx faculty also experience imposter syndrome (Brems et al., 1994), which involves feeling like a fraud in academia (Clance & Imes, 1978). Minoritized faculty are underrepresented, yet they are critical to the recruitment and success of minoritized students in higher education (Turner et al., 2008). Similarly, research on the experiences, perspectives, and presence of RAEMW administrators in the academy is crucial to the success of racial and ethnic minoritized students in higher education as the research can foster a healthier environment, offer opportunities for networking, mentorship, and leadership development, and enhance their experiences.

RAEMW Administrators

Within senior administrative positions, 22% of all 4-year university presidents are women and 40% of all chief academic officers are women (Dunn et al., 2014). Data on these groups of women is not easy to find because the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) breaks down their data on administrators by race and by gender, but not by both, and researchers do not always disaggregate their data either. Clearly, then, while women are the majority of mid-level professionals, further breakdown by race reveals that RAEMW are underrepresented throughout administration at both the mid-level and senior level, and representation remains as low as 16% nationally (Dunn et al., 2014; Pritchard et al., 2019; Whitford, 2020). Even the 16% of RAEMW women who have become administrators have faced substantial inequities that have shaped their experiences as administrators (Warner et al., 2018; Whitford, 2020). Thus, there is a need for research focused on RAEMW administrators (Johnson, 1969; Moseley, 1980; Seltzer, 2017; Whitford, 2020) as these administrators are an important resource for diverse students (Austin, 1984; Doyle, 2020; Golde, 2019; Luedke, 2017; U. S. Department of Education et al., 2016) and many higher education institutions are struggling to employ and retain RAEMW administrators (Patitu & Tack, 1998; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Teague, 2015). Research on RAEMW administrators' experiences may assist in increasing their numbers as well.

In 1980, Mosley classified Black women administrators as an endangered species. Prior research has revealed that women have different career experiences compared to men (Benjamin, 1997) and that minoritized people have different experiences than White people (Teague, 2015), yet the research on higher education women administrators is

scarce (Friday, 2014; Jarmon, 2014; Lepkowski, 2009; Nidiffer, 2001; Pritchard et al., 2019; Ramey, 1995; Sederberg & Mueller, 1992; Taylor & Stein, 2014; Valverde, 2003). Additionally, there is little research on RAEMW administrators (Abney & Richey, 1991; Alexander & Scott, 1983; Billy, 2019; Booner, 1992, 2001; Cardena, 2016; Chung, 2008; Elenes, 2020; Essed, 1991; Gallegos, 2012; Garcia, 2020; Gill & Showell, 1991; Hyun, 2005; Isabela, 2018; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Johnson, 1991; Liang & Liou, 2018; Lopez, 2013; Mella, 2012; Montez, 1998; Morley & Crossouard, 2016; Moses, 1989; Mosley, 1980; Nakanishi, 1993; Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009; Nieves-Squires, 1991; Ramos, 2008; Ramos & Yi, 2020; Roy, 2019; Sanchez-Zamora, 2013; Upadhyay, 2014; Waterman & Lindley, 2013; Wilking, 2001). The research on higher education women administrators, and especially RAEMW administrators, is scant, confirming Mosley's (1980) statement forty-one years later that these women are endangered species.

This dissertation specifically focused on the experiences of RAEMW administrators, including Asian, Black, and Latinx women who may also identify as biracial. Asian women are classified as the "model" minority but are not viewed as leaders (Mella, 2012). Asian women in higher education are absent in administrative positions (Chung, 2008; Mella, 2012; Montez, 1998; Morley & Crossouard, 2016; Nakanishi, 1993; Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009; Upadhyay, 2014; Wilking, 2001). The very few Asian women administrators within the academy often experience the "glass ceiling" effect (Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009; Upadhyay, 2014; Wilking, 2001). Black women administrators' experiences have been the catalyst for creating a leadership style that is collaborative, inclusive, and builds consensus (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). Yet, Black women administrators often experience chilly and hostile environments within higher

education institutions that are not conducive to their progress (Booner, 2001). Black women administrators' White counterparts have undermined their intellect, power, and competence (Miller & Vaughn, 1997). The research on Latinx women administrators stems from dissertations related to career pathways, leadership development, resilience, and mentorship, while other research has focused on Latinx women administrators at the community college level (Cardena, 2016; Elenes, 2020; Gallegos, 2012; Garcia, 2020; Lopez, 2013; Ramos, 2008; Sanchez-Zamora, 2013). There is an underrepresentation of Latinx women administrators due to institutional policies and practices that promote White masculinity and create isolation, tokenism, and the glass ceiling (Cardena, 2016; Elenes, 2020; Garcia, 2020; Nieves-Squires, 1991; Sanchez-Zamora, 2013). Education has changed the contours of women's lives in America, yet women have not achieved equal status with men within and outside the sphere of education (Solomon, 1985). Higher education institutions should be more intentional in fostering inclusive, supportive, cultural, racial, ethnic, and gender-affirming environments that retain RAEMW administrators because students have insisted on increased diversity, which enriches their educational experiences (American Council on Education, 2012; Kerby, 2012; The U. S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, & Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2016).

Higher education administrators are critical to the growth and development of an institution's environmental climate and culture (Austin, 1984; Logue & Anderson, 2001; Maestas et al., 2007; Milliken, 1990; Strange & Banning, 2001). In the U.S. institutions of higher education have 46.7% women administrators (Schmidt, 2020). Yet, administrators, specifically 5.9% of administrators, are RAEMW administrators in senior

level positions at PWIs (Dunn et al., 2014; Pritchard et al., 2019; Schmidt, 2020; Teague, 2015; Whitford, 2020). There are several types of institutional environments and PWIs are one type in higher education. The type of environment an institution of higher education has impacts its culture and the level of diversity acquired, the degree of involvement, actions, and success of its racial and ethnic diverse populations (Crayon, 2019; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Lee, 2002; Mueller & Thomas, 2001; Quaye et al., 2015; Rudick et al., 2017; Smith, 2015; Tierney & Lanford, 2018).

Higher Education Institutional Environments

Higher education in the U.S. has changed over the years. One challenge that higher education administrators face is the formation and continuance of an institutional environment that attracts, satisfies, and maintains students as they pursue their educational goals (Strange, 2003; Tierney & Lanford, 2018). There are four components of an institutional environment that include: physical, human aggregate, organizational, and constructed (Strange & Banning, 2001). Institutional environments are active and positive forces that stimulate and challenge individuals towards growth; release capacities, allow behaviors to occur; select favored characteristics; limit, resist, or inhibit behaviors; and actively engender stress (Strange & Banning, 2001). An institutional environment plays a major part in the development of what the institutional culture will be like (Tierney & Lanford, 2018). Culture is defined as "the deeply embedded patterns of organizational behavior and the shared values, assumptions, beliefs, or ideologies that members have about their organization or its work" (Peterson & Spencer, 1990, p. 142). Having a better understanding of culture is important for promoting a climate that institutions of higher education can use to have a positive impact on diverse populations

(Tierney & Lanford, 2018). Higher education administrators are responsible for creating institutional environments; improving experiences; providing opportunities for networking, mentorship, and leadership development for racial and ethnic minoritized students; shaping policies; and allocating budgets (Austin, 1984; Doyle, 2020; Golde, 2019; Luedke, 2017; U. S. Department of Education et al., 2016). However, there is little research on how these same environments impact RAEMW senior level administrators' career advancement.

Statement of the Problem

RAEMW administrators are underrepresented (Dunn et al., 2014; Pritchard et al., 2019; Teague, 2015; Whitford, 2020) and there is a group of racial and ethnic minoritized students who have historically experienced racism and low retention and graduation rates (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; U.S. Department of Education et al., 2016). To address these issues, higher education institutions have put effort towards recruiting women and minoritized faculty to provide a better environment for racial and ethnic minoritized student populations (Collins & Kritsonis, 2006; Smith et al., 2004; Tuitt et al., 2007). Though there have been efforts to diversify faculty, higher education institutions are not paying as much attention to administrators. In general, RAEMW administrators are not getting enough attention, while there has been some research on faculty there has been little on administrators and especially on RAEMW administrators (Austin, 1984; Logue & Anderson, 2001; Milliken, 1990). Administrators shape students' experiences and outcomes in terms of hiring practices, retention, tenure, allocation of resources, and policy setting and implementation (Logue & Anderson, 2001; Roby et al., 2013; Teague, 2015) and so understanding their experiences and trajectories may assist campuses in

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creating more welcoming environments and more equitable policies and structures for all constituencies, including racial and ethnic minoritized students. According to the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources, women are 51% of all administrators, nationally, and 16% of those are RAEMW administrators (Pritchard et al., 2019).

Higher education administrators play a crucial role on campuses, shaping the elements of the day-to-day operations and policies (Logue & Anderson, 2001), and exploring RAEMW administrators' experiences, career advancements, and institutional environments is critical for five reasons. First, the most key role of the academy is to educate students and administrators to contribute to students' education (Teague, 2015; Varouchas et al., 2018). Though the primary role of the academy is to educate students, institutions of higher education have failed to provide the same equitable education for racial and ethnic minoritized students. Second, RAEMW administrators contribute to the success of racial and ethnic minoritized students (Johnson, 1991; Milliken, 1990; Mosley, 1980; Moses, 1989; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). The retention and graduation rates of racial and ethnic minoritized students are not high enough and RAEMW administrators can increase these rates because their visibility can help create a more welcoming campus environment; promote more equitable policies; and provide needed mentorship, networks, and leadership development for racial and ethnic minoritized students (Cardena, 2016; Collins, 2002; Collins & Kritsonis, 2006; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Gallegos, 2012; Lopez, 2013; Ramos, 2008; Sanchez-Zamora, 2013; Smith et al., 2004; United States et al., 2016; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). RAEMW administrators provide diverse viewpoints to ensure that all voices are being heard in policy and budget

decisions (Meeuwisse et al., 2010). Third, much has been learned from the research

conducted on diversifying the faculty, but little attention has been allocated towards

diversifying the administrators (Collins & Kritsonis, 2006; Smith et al., 2004; Tuitt et al.,

2007). Fourth, the academy employs a large workforce, but RAEMW administrators are

underrepresented, while women are 51% of administrators nationally, only 16% are

RAEMW administrators which does not reflect the growing diversity within the student

population (Dunn et al., 2014; Pritchard et al., 2019; Teague, 2015; Whitford, 2020). A

diversified campus workforce can create an environment that is less isolating because

racial and ethnic minoritized students will see people who look like themselves.

RAEMW administrators help shape students' experiences and these administrators'

experiences should be studied to increase their numbers since diversifying the campus

helps racial and ethnic minoritized students succeed because policies and budget

allocation will be more equitable, and mentorship, networking, and leadership

development will be available (Johnson, 1991; Milliken, 1990; Mosley, 1980; Moses,

1989; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; The U. S. Department of Education, Office of the Under

Secretary, & Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2016). A

workforce should also be diverse to attract and retain employees (Forbes Insights, 2011;

Teague, 2015). RAEMW administrators can help rectify inequities in the workforce (e.g.,

pay, advancements, etc.) to ensure an equitable workplace (Aguirre, 2000; Austin, 1984;

Forbes, 2011; Hsieh & Winslow, 2006). However, administrators have not sufficiently

diversified their campuses, their faculty, or their own administrative ranks. Fifth, we want

to know how to diversify and promote RAEMW administrators because it will be

beneficial for campuses. The purpose of administrators in higher education is to shape

policies, mediate disputes, and prepare budgets, all of which shape students' experiences, however, there is not a robust body of research on administrators in general, and specifically on RAEMW administrators (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2018; Teague, 2015; The U. S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, & Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2016; Varouchas et al., 2018). RAEMW administrators can inform institutional resistance to systemic change to ensure that institutions are equitable for minoritized individuals (Connell, 2005; Milliken, 1990). Successful RAEMW administrators help develop educational and career pipelines to make the pathway easier for other minoritized individuals (Billy, 2019; Ramos & Yi, 2020; Roby et al., 2013; Waterman & Lindley, 2013; Wolfe & Freeman, 2013).

Increasing the numbers of RAEMW administrators means that minoritized student populations will see people who look like themselves in positions of power; feel more comfortable engaging in conversation; have their voices heard; be involved with making positive systemic change; have authentic mentorships; have enriched educational experiences; and experience increased persistence, retention, and graduation rates (Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998; Smith et al., 2004; Tuitt et al., 2007). Because RAEMW administrators are important to shaping the experiences of racial and ethnic minoritized students, it is critical that their experiences be studied. To help our diverse students persist and graduate, the entire campus workforce should be diversified. It is imperative that higher education institutions critically examine institutional structures, policies, and practices to address the lack of RAEMW administrators at their institutions and within the academy.

Significance of the Problem

While there is some literature on the experiences of higher education administrators, there is a lack of literature on the experiences of RAEMW administrators. This study is significant as it explores the intersection of RAEMW administrators' career development and campus environments. It provides a foundation for ensuring the success of all students by creating a supportive environment, diversifying the workforce, and improving the experiences of racial and ethnic minoritized students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of senior level RAEMW administrators who work in U.S. 4-year PWIs and analyze the impact of institutional environments on their success. Studying RAEMW administrators in the academy may assist with creating a more diverse workforce that help increase the success of racial and ethnic minoritized students. My hope is that this research is used to create a welcoming environment for all students and establish equitable policies and budget allocation for racial and ethnic minoritized students. Although administrators' leadership styles and approaches are important, the focus of this research study is on administrators' experiences.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How do Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women senior level administrators describe their experiences navigating higher education?

2. How do senior level Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women administrators describe the impact of institutional environments on their career advancement in higher education?

3. How can intersectionality, counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, and interest convergence inform research on Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women's experiences as senior level administrators?

Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this dissertation, I employed and extended two frameworks: Critical Race Theory (CRT) and intersectionality. CRT proclaims that racial inequality emerges from the societal (social, economic, racial, and legal) differences among races and is created to bolster White interests while increasing poverty and crime in minoritized communities (Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Three themes emerge from CRT: racism is embedded in the institutional and structural systems that make up American society; power structures are developed from White privilege and White supremacy; and challenges to liberalism and meritocracy are important (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). There are six key tenets: 1) counter-storytelling; 2) the permanence of racism; 3) Whiteness as property; 4) interest conversion; 5) the critique of liberalism, 6) intersectionality (Hiraldo, 2010, 2019). This study focuses on four tenets of CRT: counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, interest conversion, and intersectionality.

In addition to CRT, this study uses Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality framework to examine the interconnections of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and professional identity within RAEMW that create interconnected systems of oppression

and discrimination. The intersectionality of identities has expanded the complexity of diversity in higher education, typically including race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender and gender identity, disability, and religion. Intersectionality takes a critical perspective about the intersection of race, class, and gender to gain a better understanding of RAEMW's unique experiences (Carastathis, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989). This study was theoretically grounded in scholarly works related to CRT and Crenshaw's (1989) intersectionality framework that situate the larger issue of racialized women in higher education administration and why it matters. Conceptually, this study focused on the intersecting aspects of race and gender that can speak to RAEMW administrators' experiences with career development and how higher education institutions support their advancements, specifically those at senior level. Together these theories capture the various experiences and factors that influence the career development of RAEMW administrators.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative framework, specifically, a phenomenological approach (Edie, 1984; Koopman, 2015; Moran, 2002; van Manen, 2007). Phenomenology is the study of phenomena (Cohen, 1987). Phenomenology "is the study of human experiences and of the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 2). Phenomenology is theory based and not theory driven (Cohen, 1987; Edie, 1984; Koopman, 2015; Moran, 2002; Sokolowski, 2000; van Manen, 2007). This methodological approach allows for the understanding of the essence of the experiences of RAEMW senior level administrators.

Limitations/Delimitations

The following are the limitations and delimitations of the study. This study was delimited to RAEMW administrators in higher education who currently are working at a 4-year Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the U.S. and are at the senior level. As in all research, there is a chance of researcher bias. There is no ideal time to recruit these senior level administrators as they have demanding roles and responsibilities. My recruitment for the participants started in April after approval from IRB just before one of the busiest times of year for these women, which is commencement and the closing of the academic year. Thus, some women thought the study was interesting but could not commit to participate due to the lack of time in their busy schedules which is understandable. My identity as RAEMW pursuing a career in higher education could not be avoided but was acknowledged. I used bracketing as a way of understanding and managing subjectivity (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994).

Operational Definitions of Terms

The key terminology used in this study is defined as follows. For decades, Asian, Black, and Latinx populations have been racially and ethnically minoritized in U.S. society (Stewart, 2013). This study uses the term Racial and Ethnic minoritized women (RAEMW) administrators to encompass the different experiences and identities of this population of women within the field of higher education.

1. Career Development: Refers to the time a person decides on a career through the attainment of the stated career.

2. Diversity: Refers to the inclusion of people from different social and ethnic backgrounds, gender identities, and sexual identities (Haring-Smith, 2012)

3. Higher Education: Refers to advanced learning and education, which usually occurs at colleges and universities or beyond.

4. Institutional Environments: Refers to external institutional factors related to attending a college or university. In the context of this study, this means that institutional environments are not only physical spaces, but social, psychological, and biological spaces and factors that are created due to campus climate and culture.

5. Racial and ethnic Minoritized: Refers to the "process [action vs. noun] of population minoritization" (Benitez, 2010, p. 131) that emphasized the social construction of the "minority" status within the U.S. societal context.

6. Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women administrators: Refers to "groups that are different in race, religious creed, nation of origin, sexuality, and gender and as a result of social constructs have less power or representation compared to other members or groups in society" (Smith, 2016). In the context of this study, this included Asian, Black, and Latinx women administrators who may also identify as biracial.

7. Senior level Administrators: Refers to administrators at the cabinet level (Washington et al., 2018).

Overview of the Study

The presentation of this study is highlighted in five chapters. Chapter one provides an introductory overview of the issues surrounding the topic, statement of the

problem, the significance of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the background of the study, the theoretical framework, the methodology and delimitations, operational definitions as well as an overview of the study. Chapter two provides a literature review of the major themes surrounding the topic as well as the theoretical and conceptual framework. Chapter three outlines the methodology utilized in the study. Chapter four reports the findings of the study. Chapter five provides an overall summary of the paper, including the discussion, conclusion, implications, and recommendations.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This study explores the experiences of RAEMW senior level administrators and the impact of 4-year PWI's environments on their success and advancement. First, I provide a brief overview of the historical context of U.S. higher education that highlights women's voting rights in the U.S., which was the first large-scale social movement for women, and the effect of this movement on the conceptualization of race and gender. Next, I provide an overview of women's access and experiences in higher education that highlights the experiences of RAEMW in general, more specifically RAEMW college administrators and their barriers to advancement. Finally, I provide an overview of the theoretical and conceptual framework that highlights CRT and Crenshaw's intersectionality framework.

Historical Context of U.S. Higher Education

The value of higher education continues to be debated by academics within the academy; from an economic standpoint, individuals who have a college education earn more than those who do not (Greenstein, 2017). Yet, U.S. institutions of higher education have excluded people based on their gender, race, ethnicity, social class, sexual orientation, and religion (Eckel & King, 2004). When higher education began in the U.S., wealthy White men were the only group with privilege (Calvo, 2018). Historically, higher education excluded women. Women's exclusion in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ended when they gained access to higher education institutions in 1833, which was about two hundred years after the founding of Harvard College (Chamberlain, 1991;

Cohen & Kisher, 2010; Morison, 1995). For example, Black women did not gain access to college in the U.S. until 1841 when Oberlin College, which admitted Black men, began granting bachelor's degrees to Black women (Key Events in Black Higher Education, n.d.; Oberlin History, n.d.). U.S. higher education institutions have discriminated against, marginalized, and treated women unfairly since their inception (Cohen & Kisher, 2010; Nidiffer, 2002; Solomon, 1985). In the U.S., the first big social movement for women was the women's voting rights. During these times, women began demanding access to societal rights that White men always had (Calvo, 2018). The Suffrage Movement was the first step that women took to make sure that women were included in society. Women had to fight every step of the way for inclusion in society; they had to fight for education rights, voting rights, employment rights, and other civil rights throughout our nation's history; although White women's advances and the advances for RAEMW have not been equal (Valbuena, 2015).

In the U.S., in the 1800s, women had few legal rights; they did not have the right to vote and so they began to organize, petition, and picket to obtain their voting rights. On July 19 and 20 in 1848, the first Woman's Rights Convention was held, which fought for the social, civil, and religious rights of women, led by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (The United States Department of Justice, 2017). In 1869, Elizabeth Cady Stanton along with Susan B. Anthony founded the National Woman Suffrage Association (NWSA), a radical association to push for women's rights issues. The suffrage movement, though, focused more of its attention on the rights of White women, to the detriment of Black women and other women of color (The United States Department of Justice, 2017). While the Fifteenth Amendment, in 1870, gave Black men the right to

vote, women were not allowed to vote. It was not until 1920, when President Woodrow Wilson signed the Nineteenth Amendment, that American Women won full voting rights (NWHM, n.d.). However, this did not fully include Black women, who were denied the right to vote, particularly in Southern states. It was not until forty-five years later, on August 6, 1965, because of the Civil Rights Movement, that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibited racial discrimination in voting and Black people, both men and women were able to fully exercise their right to vote (NWHM, n.d.; The United States Department of Justice, 2017).

The Civil Rights movement was led mostly by men (History, 2020), and the women's rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s in turn sought equal rights, opportunities, and more freedom for women (Burkett, 2020). Nevertheless, White women led and were the focus of the women's rights movement. Thus, RAEMW and their experiences and freedoms were not the focus of either movement. The U.S. histories are reflective of racism and sexism in all aspects of American life, including in education. Currently, in higher education, although women are the majority of students, women are underrepresented as faculty and administrators because of sexism, and minoritized people are underrepresented because of racism (Friday, 2014; Gallegos, 2012; Jarmon, 2014; Liang & Liou, 2018; Lopez, 2013; Nidiffer, 2001; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Sanchez-Zamora, 2013; Seltzer, 2017; Taylor & Stein, 2014). However, neither the prejudices of sexism nor racism fully explains the position of RAEMW. Racial and Ethnic minoritized women are a distinctive group because of their intersecting racial, ethnic, and gender identities.

Conceptualization of Race and Gender

Though race and gender are social constructions, they fundamentally mediate people's lives in the world at large (Haslanger, 2017; Lopez, 1995; Lorber, 1994; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Unger & Crawford, 1992; Wade, 2015) and influence other group memberships and identities (England et al., 2020; Frable et al., 1990; Perry et al., 2013; Settles et al., 2008). Individual experiences based on an individual's race are contextualized and shaped by the experiences based on an individual's gender and vice versa (Settles et al., 2008). The intersection of race and gender identity is the root of inequity experienced by RAEMW, not only at higher education institutions but also within society (Hazari et al., 2013; Lopez, 1995; Settles et al., 2008; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). The concept of race continues to influence inequities within the field of education, including higher education, and it is critical to keep in mind how systems, policies, laws, and institutions influence issues of access, success, and equity. Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women administrators at colleges and universities experience oppression, discrimination, inequality, and inequity that establish their experiences. Much was learned from the previous studies on administrators and even more from the prior studies when examining race among administrators (Abney & Richey, 1991; Alexander & Scott, 1983; Gill & Showell, 1991; Johnson, 1991; Mosley, 1980). Additionally, much was learned from previous studies on gender in higher education among administrators (Alexander & Scott, 1983; Gill & Showell, 1991; Johnson, 1991; Mosley, 1980). However, there has been little research focused on the intersectionality of these identities or other identities. As a result, this dissertation assisted all women in fostering a supportive environment on their campuses for all students. Having a comfortable

environment can improve the experiences of racially and ethnically minoritized students by providing opportunities for networking, mentoring, and leadership development. I hope that this study helps women in higher education as they ascend to leadership positions.

Women's Access and Experiences in Higher Education

Higher education in the U.S. has been male-dominated and male-centric since its creation (Llyod-Jones, 2009; Mosley, 1980). Obtaining a college degree has been the "American dream" for individuals regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religious belief, or disability (Chavez et al., 2007; Hanson & Zogby, 2010). Still, access to higher education has been a challenge, hindering the U.S. from reaching its true potential since its creation. According to Calvo (2018), women had to overcome barriers, first to gain college access, second to graduate, and last to practice a profession. To gain access to higher education some women had to disguise themselves as men (Calvo, 2018). As time progressed, access to higher education has changed dramatically and provided more opportunities for more people (Calvo, 2018; Eckel & King, 2007; Hanson & Zogby, 2010; Stone et al., 2012), creating a pathway for social mobility and opening the door for inclusion of minoritized people and women in higher education (Eckel & King, 2007; Stone et al., 2012).

The first door that was opened for women in higher education as administrators was the Dean of Women position (Nidiffer, 2002; Schwartz, 1997). The Dean of women position was created due to the increased enrollment of women participating in co-education during the Progressive Era (1880-1915), and in 1918, it became a profession (Nidiffer, 2002; Schwartz, 1997). In 1916, Teachers College of Columbia University

established a graduate program for training Deans of Women to advance their

knowledge, skills, and credibility (Schwartz, 1997). The women in these positions had

two goals: to construct a new professional identity and improve the quality of women

students' experiences (Nidiffer, 2001, 2002). The professional practices for higher

education administration and student affairs were created by Deans of Women (Schwartz,

1997). Additionally, the Dean of Women's positions were the catalysts for women

gaining other administrative positions in higher education. However, as co-education

became more commonplace, the Dean of Women's positions were phased out and the

Dean of Students positions, filled almost exclusively by men, addressed the concerns of

both male and female students (Nidiffer, 2001, 2002; Schwartz, 1997). As the shift from

the position of Dean of Women to Dean of Students began to take place, the field of

higher education started to shift the focus of higher education. The concern about access

to higher education shifted towards inclusion, retention, persistence, and graduation rates

(Corrigan, 2003; Gladieux & Swail, 2000; Lee & Darity, 2012; Lent & Brown, 2012;

Tinto, 2005). As the focus of higher education began to shift, so too did the literature

related to the issues women faced within the field of higher education.

A review of the literature on women in higher education revealed that women,

regardless of their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation, have

experienced discrimination, isolation, tokenism, and other barriers to access, equity,

opportunity, and progression (Carroll, 1980; Cazarez, 2020; Cokley et al., 2017;

Edwards, 2019; Howard-Vital, 1989; Muñoz et al., 2018; Ramos & Yi, 2020; Roy, 2019;

Solorzano et al., 2000; SteelFisher et al., 2019; Uzogara, 2019; Vue et al., 2017;

Walkington, 2017; Wei et al., 2020). Women working as administrators experience

excessive demands on their time as well as role conflict, stress, and limited opportunities for mobility (Austin, 1984; Geary, 2016). However, RAEMW experiences these demands differently depending on the type of institutional environment they are working in as well as their specific racial and ethnic identity.

Institutional Environments

There are various types of institutions of higher education in the U.S., including 4-year colleges and universities, community (2-year) and Junior colleges, Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), and Native-Serving Institutions (NSIs), Predominately White Institutions (PWIs), Liberal Arts colleges, Women's Colleges, Technical Institutes, and Professional Schools that can be either public, private, nonprofit, or for-profit (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2022). Each institutional type has varying percentages of gender representation for racial and ethnic groups when it comes to administrative positions as shown in Table 1. The percentages of White women and White men across each institutional type and administrative positions are excluded from Table 1. The largest group of RAEMW administrators who represent top executive officers are from HBCUs (31.6%) compared to PWIs (5.4%); senior institutional officers are from HBCUs (35.5%) compared to PWIs (6.0%); academic deans are from HBCUs (45.5%) compared to PWIs (6.6%); institutional administrators are from NSIs (55.6%) compared to PWIs (11.1%); heads of divisions are from HBCUs (53.5%) compared to PWIs (8.2%); and associate/assistant deans are from HBCUs (52.0%) compared to PWIs (9.4%) (Schmidt, 2020).

Additionally, the representation of RAEMW varies across each institutional type as shown in Table 2. At AANAPISIs, Asian women represent 8.3% of top executive officers, 2.0% of senior institutional officers, 4.2% of academic deans, 2.2% of institutional administrators, 7.0% of heads of divisions, and 7.0% of associate/assistant dean (Schmidt, 2020). At HBCUs, Black women represent 31.6% top executive officers, 31.2% of senior institutional officers, 45.5% of academic deans, 46.8% of institutional administrators, 51.2% of heads of divisions, and 52.0% of associate/assistant dean (Schmidt, 2020). At HSIs, Latinx women represent 6.2% top executive officers, 8.1% of senior institutional officers, 3.3% of academic deans, 20.2% of institutional administrators, 14.9% of heads of divisions, and 6.4% of associate/assistant dean (Schmidt, 2020). Specifically, at 4-year PWIs there is an underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minoritized students, faculty, staff, and administrators (Dougé, 2020; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Wolfe & Freeman, 2013).

Table 1

Percentage of Administrators of Color by Institutional Type and Gender

Administrative positions	Gender	Institutional Types				
		PWI	AANAPISI	HBCU	HSI	NSI
Top Executive Officers	Women	5.4%	16.7%	31.6%	9.2%	30.0%
	Men	6.8%	8.3%	57.9%	15.4%	10.0%
Senior Institutional Officers	Women	6.0%	20.0%	35.5%	13.0%	12.5%
	Men	6.2%	10.0%	57.9%	18.2%	16.7%
Academic Deans	Women	6.6%	18.8%	45.5%	7.9%	25.0%
	Men	7.9%	6.2%	40.9%	10.5%	4.2%
Institutional Administrators	Women	11.1%	21.7%	50.6%	28.3%	55.6%
	Men	6.7%	10.9%	35.1%	14.6%	0.0%
Heads of Divisions	Women	8.2%	19.1%	53.5%	21.3%	20.0%
	Men	5.9%	16.5%	37.1%	16.6%	0.0%
Associate/ Assistant Deans	Women	9.4%	15.8%	52.0%	20.5%	33.3%
	Men	7.8%	8.8%	36.0%	7.1%	0.0%

Note. This table does not include the percentages of White men or White women within these administrative positions. Created from *The representation of women and racial/ethnic minorities in the workforce of minority-serving higher education institutions* by A. Schmidt, 2020.

Table 2

Percentage of Administrators of Color by Race/Ethnicity Status, Gender, and Institutional Type

Administrative Positions	Race & Ethnicity	Gender	Institutional Types				
			PWI	AANAPISI	HBCU	HSI	NSI
Top Executive Officers	Asian	Women	1.1%	8.3%	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%
		Men	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	4.6%	0.0%
	Black	Women	2.6%	8.3%	31.6%	1.5%	0.0%
		Men	3.2%	0.0%	57.9%	1.5%	0.0%
	Latinx	Women	1.3%	0.0%	0.0%	6.2%	0.0%
		Men	1.6%	8.3%	0.0%	9.2%	0.0%
Senior Institutional Officers	Asian	Women	0.9%	2.0%	2.2%	0.6%	4.2%
		Men	1.3%	4.0%	6.5%	2.3%	0.0%
	Black	Women	3.1%	8.0%	31.2%	4.0%	0.0%
		Men	2.9%	4.0%	37.6%	2.9%	4.2%
	Latinx	Women	1.5%	10.0%	1.1%	8.1%	0.0%
		Men	1.4%	2.0%	0.0%	11.5%	0.0%
Academic Deans	Asian	Women	1.2%	4.2%	0.0%	1.3%	0.0%
		Men	2.6%	2.1%	3.0%	3.3%	4.2%
	Black	Women	3.9%	6.2%	45.5%	2.6%	0.0%
		Men	3.1%	4.2%	36.4%	2.0%	0.0%
	Latinx	Women	1.0%	8.3%	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%
		Men	1.5%	0.0%	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%

Table 2

Administrative Positions	Race & Ethnicity	Gender	Institutional Types				
			PWI	AANAPISI	HBCU	HSI	NSI
Institutional Administrators	Asian	Women	1.6%	2.2%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%
		Men	1.1%	4.3%	0.0%	2.1%	0.0%
	Black	Women	5.9%	8.7%	46.8%	3.9%	0.0%
		Men	3.4%	0.0%	31.2%	2.1%	0.0%
	Latinx	Women	2.6%	8.7%	3.9%	20.2%	11.1%
		Men	1.5%	6.5%	1.3%	9.9%	0.0%
Heads of Divisions	Asian	Women	1.5%	7.0%	0.6%	0.8%	0.0%
		Men	1.0%	5.2%	2.4%	2.1%	0.0%
	Black	Women	4.0%	5.2%	51.2%	4.1%	0.0%
		Men	2.8%	4.3%	31.8%	2.5%	0.0%
	Latinx	Women	1.8%	4.3%	1.2%	14.9%	0.0%
		Men	1.6%	4.3%	1.8%	11.0%	0.0%
Associate/ Assistant Deans	Asian	Women	2.0%	7.0%	0.0%	7.1%	0.0%
		Men	2.9%	7.0%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%
	Black	Women	4.6%	7.0%	52.0%	5.8%	0.0%
		Men	2.7%	0.0%	36.0%	2.6%	0.0%
	Latinx	Women	1.9%	0.0%	0.0%	6.4%	16.7%
		Men	1.6%	1.8%	0.0%	1.9%	0.0%

Note. This table does not include the percentages of White or Indigenous men or women within these administrative positions. Created from *The representation of women and racial/ethnic minorities in the workforce of minority-serving higher education institutions* by A. Schmidt, 2020.

In the early 20th century, the existence of racial and ethnic faculty and administrators at PWIs was so sparse that people could identify them by name (Wolfe & Freeman, 2013). Currently, this disproportionate representation continues and the racial and ethnic administrators who do work at PWIs stay for a brief period due to the series of "-isms" that they encounter (Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Wolfe & Freeman, 2013). In order for institutions of higher education to amend the lack of racial, ethnic, and gender representation of students, faculty, staff, and administrators, the institutional environment and culture must be understood (Dougé, 2020; Gasman et al., 2015; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Lee, 2002; Peterson & Spencer, 1990; Simms, 2018; Stewart, 2013; Tierney & Landford, 2018; Wolfe & Freeman, 2013). Higher education institutional environments have a powerful influence on the behavior and development of values and characteristics of their constituents (Kuh, 2000). The decisions made by higher education administrators shape institutional environments and administrators ensure that these environments retain students and assist them with obtaining their degrees (Lee, 2002; Strange, 2003; Tierney & Lanford, 2018). These environments affect the way students utilize their time, how satisfied they are with the institution, and the extent to which they benefit from being at the institution (Kuh, 2000; Pascarella, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). However, there are various components of institutional environments that higher education administrators need to understand to be effective in their roles.

Institutional Components

These components in institutional environments are physical, human aggregate, organizational, and constructed (Strange, 2003; Strange & Banning, 2001). The first component, the physical, refers to the features and designs of the institution. An

institution's physical features are the most influential elements in how visitors view the

institution for the first time. Administrators make decisions about the operation of the

institution and thus need to ensure that the physical appearance is appealing and portrays

the right messages (both verbal and nonverbal) to not only potential students and faculty

but also administrators specifically, RAEMW administrators (Austin, 1984; Logue &

Anderson, 2001; Maestas et al., 2007; Milliken, 1990; Strange & Banning, 2001). The

second component, human aggregate, considers how an individual's unique

characteristics help design the environment. The elements that comprise the human

aggregate component include subcultures, typologies, styles, and person-environment

interactions. Differences among populations of students are categorized in these forms, as

are differences among faculty and administrators, which contribute to the development of

institutional culture (Strange, 2003; Strange & Banning, 2001). RAEMW administrators

are one example of the human aggregate component. The third component,

organizational, refers to coordinated structures that maintain explicit objectives that

consist of organizational complexity, centralization, formalization, stratification,

production, and efficiency (Strange, 2003). Organizational complexity in higher

education refers to subunits that include the multiple schools and programs, student

activities, student success efforts, campus dining, campus housing, as well as public

safety or campus police, among others (Strange, 2003; Strange & Banning, 2001). All

these subunits generate complexity within an organization and each subunit has its own

specialized knowledge that contributes to an institution's environment. Administrators in

these subunits make decisions about policies and procedures, and the distribution of

resources and funding that affect the social, cultural, and financial conditions of an

institution (Austin, 1984; Logue & Anderson, 2001; Maestas et al., 2007; Milliken, 1990; Roby et al., 2013; Strange & Banning, 2001). However, when there is a lack of RAEMW administrators, there is a lack of diverse perspectives that influence those decisions. The fourth component, constructed, refers to the aggregate view of individuals in a setting that consists of social climate and campus culture (Strange, 2003). These environmental elements contribute to establishing the perceptions of the institution, its values, traditions, and relationships. Administrators construct the way institutional environments influence the establishment of institutional culture (Hoppes & Holley, 2014; Logue & Anderson, 2001; Maestas et al., 2007; Milliken, 1990; Roby et al., 2013; Tierney & Lanford, 2018). When groups of people, such as RAEMW administrators are underrepresented, their collective perceptions are missing at the institutions. Thus, an institution's social climate and campus culture are one-dimensional (Strange, 2003; Strange & Banning, 2001; Tierney & Lanford, 2018).

An institution's culture influences how diversity is attained in higher education (Lee, 2002). The culture of an institution of higher education plays a significant role in how diverse student populations engage and behave (Lee, 2002; Tierney & Lanford, 2018). Culture shapes the way people make meaning of their experiences, make decisions, and the values portrayed (Mueller & Thomas, 2001). It is the role of higher education administrators to ensure that their institutional environment enhances students' experiences and provides them with networking, mentorship, and leadership opportunities (Austin, 1984; Doyle, 2020; Golde, 2019; Luedke, 2017; U. S. Department of Education et al., 2016). The culture of a school is a significant factor in the success of its racial and ethnic minoritized populations (Crayon, 2019; Harper & Hurtado, 2007;

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Quaye et al., 2015; Rudick et al., 2017; Smith, 2015). At PWIs, the institutional culture as it relates to racial and ethnic minoritized students, faculty, and administrators is one that is not supportive of diversity and is isolating (Crayon, 2019; Dougé, 2020; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1998; Quaye et al., 2015; Rudick et al., 2017; Smith, 2015; Wolfe & Freeman, 2013).

Racial and ethnic minoritized populations often feel unsupported when their culture is not being addressed or represented within their institution (Rudick et al., 2017; Smith, 2015; Wolfe & Freeman, 2013), especially when their culture is not represented pedagogically (Crayon, 2019; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1998; Quaye et al., 2015; Rudick et al., 2017; Smith, 2015). At PWIs, it is easy for racial and ethnic minoritized students, faculty, and administrators to lose who they are culturally (Crayon, 2019; Dougé, 2020; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 1998; Quaye et al., 2015; Rudick et al., 2017; Smith, 2015; Wolfe & Freeman, 2013). An institution's culture has power over its climate, and it is the responsibility of higher education administrators to ensure that both the culture and climate of their institution promote equitable opportunities for the success of all students, especially diverse students (Lee, 2002). However, these equitable opportunities do not come easily, as RAEMW administrators must first overcome numerous barriers to advance in their careers to enact change.

Barriers to Advancement

Barriers that RAEMW administrators in higher education face come in different forms and impact the workplace and interpersonal perceptions (Jackson & O'Callaghan,

2009). There are three categories of barriers to advancement: social, institutional, and internal (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). First, social barriers consist of the racial and ethnic climate where an institution is located (i.e., a city or region that is highly segregated would be limited in its administrative positions) and external social pressures within educational institutions such as racism and sexism, which are rooted within the larger society and are present in the daily life and work of organizations (Chung, 2009; Garcia, 2020; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). Second, institutional barriers consist of policies and practices influenced by social pressures (Cardena, 2016; Elenes, 2020; Garcia, 2020; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Montez, 1998; Nieves-Squires, 1991). Lastly, internal barriers consist of fear of failure or success, low self-esteem, family and career balance, and role conflict (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Mosley, 1980).

Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women administrators also experience barriers to mobility and limited pipelines to career advancement (Chung, 2009; Isabela, 2018) and work to balance work, family, and womanhood (Chung, 2009; Garcia, 2020). Finding and maintaining this balance is critical to the promotion of RAEMW administrators as well as several factors such as networking, experiences, friendships, politics, and faculty recommendations (Alexander & Scott, 1983; Gill & Showell, 1991; Johnson, 1991). RAEMW administrators report feeling isolated and tokenized (Isabela, 2018; Liang & Liou, 2018); suffering a double consciousness (Cardena, 2016; Chung, 2009; Du Bois, 2008; Isabela, 2018); experiencing a stressful environment (Cardena, 2016; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Montez, 1998); lacking mentorship (Garcia, 2020; Liang & Liou, 2018) and not being accepted and treated as equals (Gorena, 1996); and deconstructing

power imbalances (Elenes, 2020; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017), which are all forms of

oppression. Yet, little research has been published on how these environments shape

RAEMW senior level administrators' experiences and career advancement.

Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women's Experiences

Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women's experiences in colleges and universities

differ from those of their White counterparts (Carroll, 1980; Cazarez, 2020; Howard-

Vital, 1989; Muñoz et al., 2018; Ramos & Yi, 2020; Roy, 2019; SteelFisher et al., 2019;

Uzogara, 2019; Vue et al., 2017). Racial and ethnic minoritized women as students and

faculty experience microaggressions, discrimination, isolation, and tokenism (Cokley et

al., 2017; Edwards, 2019; Solorzano et al., 2000; Walkington, 2017; Wei et al., 2020).

These experiences have a major impact on their progression and success in life. While

there has been research on specific groups of Asian, Black, and Latinx women who may

also identify as biracial, there has not been much research on their collective experiences.

Like RAEMW students and faculty, RAEMW administrators share similar experiences

(Abney & Richey, 1991; Alexander & Scott, 1983; Billy, 2019; Cardena, 2016; Chung,

2008; Elenes, 2020; Gallegos, 2012; Garcia, 2020; Gill & Showell, 1991; Guiffrida &

Douthit, 2010; Jean-Marie & Brooks, 2011; Johnson, 1991; Lopez, 2013; Mella, 2012;

Montez, 1998; Moses, 1989; Mosley, 1980; Nakanishi, 1993; Neilson & Suyemoto,

2009; Nieves-Squires, 1991; Ramos, 2008; Ramos & Yi, 2020; Roy, 2019; Sanchez-

Zamora, 2013; Upadhyay, 2014; Wilking, 2001; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). However,

though these RAEMW share similar experiences there are still tensions among the

groups, for example Asian women are considered the Model Minority and are hired at a

higher rate than other RAEMW; Black women are stuck behind the shadows of Black

men and White women and experience the most disadvantages in higher education compared to other RAEMW; and Latinx women struggle with their identity compared with other RAEMW (Buckingham, 2019; Carroll, 1980; Cazarez, 2020; Dickens, 2014; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Jacobs, 1996; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Meeuwisse et al., 2010; Mella, 2012; Miles, 2012; Montez, 1998; Moore, 1987; Mosley, 1980; Nakanishi, 1993; The U. S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, & Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, 2016; Walkington, 2017; Uzogara, 2019). The research on RAEMW's experiences as students and faculty has paved the way to explore the experiences of RAEMW administrators in higher education.

Administrators are a critical component of a high quality and successful university (Austin, 1984). Administrators make decisions about policies and operations to ensure the continued quality and success of their institutions. The success of institutional operations is affected by the internal and external pressures of changing social, cultural, and financial conditions (Austin, 1984; Logue & Anderson, 2001; Milliken, 1990). Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women administrators' lived experiences are influenced by socio-political issues such as race, gender, and class that affect opportunities for growth in employment and financial security (Llyod-Jones, 2009; Miles, 2012). Yet, 87% of senior level administrators are White and research has focused primarily on their experiences to the exclusion of other racial and ethnic groups (Austin, 1984; Logue & Anderson, 2001; Milliken, 1990; Seltzer, 2017). While women are the majority of mid-level administrators, men still are the majority in senior level positions, as are White people (Austin, 1984; Logue & Anderson, 2001; Milliken, 1990; Seltzer, 2017). The lack

of women, especially RAEMW in senior level positions, is due to the "glass ceiling," an

invisible barrier to advancement for women and minoritized people (Clark et al., 1999;

Cotter et al., 2001; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Jarmon, 2014; Upadhyay, 2014). Racial

and Ethnic Minoritized Women administrators are a small segment of the totality of

administrators, and similarly, the research on the experiences of RAEMW administrators

is scarce in the literature. Due to the lack of literature on RAEMW administrators,

specifically, Asian, Black, and Latinx women including those who may also identify as

biracial, in higher education, the literature review also includes studies on RAEMW

administrators at the K-12 level.

Asian Women

Asian women comprise 5% of full-time faculty (U.S. Department of Education,

National Center for Education Statistics, 2020), but only 1.8% of administrators

(Pritchard et al., 2019). Overall, Asian women are perceived as one-dimensional, hyper

feminine, passive, docile, submissive, quiet, and foreign, resulting in oppression (Chung,

2008; Espiritu, 2008; Isabela, 2018; Kim et al., 2014; Mella, 2012; Roy, 2019). Research

has shown that Asian women experience institutional discrimination in salary and

promotions (Roy, 2019; SteelFisher et al., 2019). Additionally, Asian women faculty

experience resistance in the classroom, even from Asian students who internalize racism

and sexism, which bolsters the ideology of Whiteness within the academy (Li & Beckett,

2006). Asian women feel they lack the social skills to be leaders (Chu, 1986; Chung,

2008).

Research on Asian women administrators in higher education is limited (Chung, 2008; Mella, 2012; Montez, 1998; Nakanishi, 1993; Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009; Roy, 2019; Upadhyay, 2014; Wilking, 2001). According to the American Council on Education (2017), only 1.2% of college presidents are Asian women. The model minority stereotype affects the career of Asian women in higher education and external and self-created barriers keep Asian women from attaining top leadership positions (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Mella, 2012; Montez, 1998; Nakanishi, 1993). In the K-12 educational system, Asian women are similarly viewed as the model minority but not as leaders (Isabela, 2018; Liang & Liou, 2018; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Mella, 2012). Collectively, the research has shown that Asian women are absent in leadership positions in higher education (Chung, 2008; Isabela, 2018; Liang & Liou, 2018; Mella, 2012; Montez, 1998; Nakanishi, 1993; Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009; Roy, 2019; Upadhyay, 2014; Wilking, 2001). Their absence is due, in part, to the negativity of workplace environments that are depletive to Asian women (Chung, 2008; Roy, 2019). Asian women administrators who manage to persist in the academy experience the glass ceiling effect that hinders their advancement (Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009; Upadhyay, 2014; Wilking, 2001). There are few support systems or resources to help Asian women build their confidence (Isabela, 2018). To break through the glass ceiling, institutions should have intentional interventions that address the underrepresentation of Asian educational leaders, provide training programs in educational leadership that recognize cultural and gender differentiation, and commit to guiding these women to help them overcome barriers (Isabela, 2018; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Montez, 1998). Lastly, Asian women are underrepresented in senior level positions, in part, because it conflicts

with their Asian cultural values of women staying home to take care of the children (Hyun, 2005; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017).

Black Women

Black women have struggled with gaining an identity of their own in education and society separate from Black males or White females (Howard-Vital, 1989). Black women complete college at higher rates than Black men but are given little to no attention (Abney & Richey, 1991; Benjamin, 1997; Buckingham, 2019; Carroll, 1980; Gill & Showell, 1991; Settles et al., 2008; Slater, 1994; Tate, 2017; Vue et al., 2017; Walkington, 2017). Black women in higher education are often underutilized, isolated, and demoralized (Carroll, 1980). Though Black women have managed to obtain terminal degrees, they are still subject to the most disadvantage in higher education (Buckingham, 2019; Carroll, 1980; Dickens, 2014; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Miles, 2012; Walkington, 2017). There is not a more isolated subgroup in higher education than Black women as they experience pressures of both racial and sexual discrimination, which has an impact on their sense of belonging (Carroll, 1980; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Jacobs, 1996; Meeuwisse et al., 2010; Moore, 1987; Mosley, 1980).

Mosley's (1980) study created a foundation and advocated for more research on Black women college administrators. Black women experience racial, gender, class, and heterosexist discrimination within higher education institutions (Abney & Richey, 1991; Alexander & Scott, 1983; Gill & Showell, 1991; Johnson, 1991; Moses, 1989; Mosley, 1980). Both PWIs and HBCUs have specific negative influences on Black women administrators; at PWIs, they experience toxic campus environments related to race,

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gender, class, and credentials, and at HBCUs, Black women administrators experience gender and heterosexist discrimination (Alexander & Scott, 1983; Gill & Showell, 1991; Johnson, 1991; Moses, 1989; Mosley, 1980). Most HBCUs try to design inclusive campus climates that provide educational training for Black female students (Johnson, 1991; Moses, 1989; Mosley, 1980), while most PWIs attempt to limit the progress of Black female students in higher education (Alexander & Scott, 1983; Gill & Showell, 1991; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Jean-Marie & Brooks, 2011; Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Research on Black women administrators in the K-12 educational system has shown that Black K-12 women administrators are similarly underrepresented in these environments and that their multiple identities made them targets of discrimination related to racism, sexism, classism, tokenism, and external resistance (Davis, 2022; Guilory-Lacey, 2020; Holley, 2021; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Mahatmya et al., 2022; Moore, 2013; Spicer, 2004). Black K-12 women administrators were not seen as intelligent and feared destroying opportunities for other minoritized women because of the challenge to balance work and home life (Holley, 2021). However, Black K-12 women administrators benefit from mentorship, networking, and having effective communication skills (Davis, 2022; Guilory-Lacey, 2020; Holley, 2021; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Mahatmya et al., 2022; Moore, 2013; Spicer, 2004). When times are rough for these women, they acquire strength through resilience, spirituality, self-care, and saying "No" (Davis, 2022).

Double Consciousness. W. E. B. Du Bois coined the term double consciousness, conceptualizing the idea of African Americans having a "two-ness" of being an American and a Negro; an internal conflict of "two warring ideals in one Black body" (Du Bois, 2008, p. 3). Du Bois highlighted race in the U.S. as Black Americans struggled to

reconcile their identities as Black American citizens (Bruce, 1992). The analysis suggests that Blackness can be understood only in terms of Whiteness (Buckingham, 2019). Double consciousness is a peculiar sensation as it forces one to view themselves from their unique perspective but also from the perspective of others (Bruce, 1992; Buckingham, 2019). This concept of double consciousness can also be applied to Black women as they struggle with a two-ness identity of being Black and being women in society (Buckingham, 2019). Double consciousness is being self-aware and aware of everything around oneself (Dickens, 2014). Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women administrators may experience double consciousness, a feeling of two-ness — a racially minoritized female person and a senior level administrator.

Latinx Women

Latinx women have struggled to find their identity within society as they also have unique experiences in higher education, like Black women (Cazarez, 2020; Uzogara, 2019). Research on Latinx women revealed that they do not isolate their social identities as they all form their experiences as professionals (Gonzáles-Figueroa & Young, 2005; Sánchez et al., 2020). Latinx women also experience racism within the campus climate (Muñoz et al., 2018; Vue et al., 2017). Most of the research on Latinx women administrators is limited to dissertations that examined career pathways, leadership development, mentoring relationships, and resilience (Cardena, 2016; Gallegos, 2012; Lopez, 2013; Ramos, 2008; Sanchez-Zamora, 2013). Other research on Latinx women administrators focuses on community colleges (Elenes, 2020; Garcia, 2020). Collectively, there is an underrepresentation of Latinx women administrators due to underlying practices that promote White masculine leadership norms, and these

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women experience isolation, tokenism, and the glass ceiling effect (Cardena, 2016; Elenes, 2020; Garcia, 2020; Nieves-Squires, 1991; Sanchez-Zamora, 2013). According to Cardena (2016), Latinx women senior administrators have demonstrated a strong relationship between self-efficacy and achievement, and have supportive families, supportive networks, and have elevated levels of ethnic identity and acculturation, which are critical for their success as administrators. However, Latinx women administrators also experience barriers to their career advancement within higher education and the K-12 educational system (Cardena, 2016; Elenes, 2020; Garcia, 2020; Nieves-Squires, 1991).

Latinx women administrators within the K-12 educational system revealed that they experience challenges related to racial and ethnic identity, racism, sexism, culture, bias, microaggressions, and imposter syndrome (Estrada, 2020; Falk, 2011; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Mahatmya et al., 2022; Murakami et al., 2018; Rodela et al., 2019; Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2020). Additionally, they lack support, opportunities, and mentors; struggle with work and family balance; struggle with acceptance as administrators; are invisible in research and practice and lack representation at the senior administrative levels (Estrada, 2020; Falk, 2011; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Mahatmya et al., 2022; Murakami et al., 2018; Rodela et al., 2019; Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2020). However, the success of Latinx K-12 women administrators is shaped by family support, encouragement from various educators, and their intrinsic determination (Falk, 2011; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Mahatmya et al., 2022; Murakami et al., 2018; Rodela et al., 2019; Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2020). To better understand and deconstruct the historical oppression of the higher education system, we must first

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understand the CRT framework and Crenshaw's intersectionality framework, both of which add value and different perspectives on the experiences of RAEMW administrators.

Theoretical Framework

This section describes the two theoretical frameworks that guide this study. In this study, I take a critical stance to examine the persistent issues of race and inequities and to analyze the ideological power structures embedded within racial, ethnic, gender, and economic hierarchies that RAEMW administrators in education experience. First, I describe CRT as a framework for understanding how RAEMW senior level administrators experience racism both within and outside institutions of higher education. Next, I describe Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality as another framework for understanding how RAEMW senior level administrators experience the intersection of racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism within institutions of higher education and how The Combahee River Collective was the manifestation of intersectionality from which Kimberlé Crenshaw built upon. Many researchers think of intersectionality as another tenet of CRT (Abrams & Moio, 2009; Campbell, 2014; Capper, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Solóranzo & Villalpando, 1998; Tate, 1997), however, it can also be looked at as a separate theory as explained in more detail later. According to these researchers, CRT's intersectionality (anti-essentialism) tenet examines the various intersecting planes of oppression and inequality (racism, sexism, classism, and ableism) that people experience in society because of their multiple minoritized identities (Abrams, 2009; Campbell, 2014; Capper, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Solóranzo, 1998; Tate, 1997). This suggests that a focus on one identity, such as race, can produce social

exclusion and deprive individuals of the ability to express their true personal identities (Abrams, 2009; Campbell, 2014; Capper, 2015; Grillo, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Solóranzo, 1998; Tate, 1997). Critical Race Theory theorists proclaim that a lack of a multidimensional analytic framework repeats patterns of exclusion (Abrams, 2009; Bell, 1995b; Campbell, 2014; Capper, 2015; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings, & Tate, 1995; Tate IV, 1997). Intersectionality has recently become a tenet of CRT research, but it has not been the primary focus and thus the research on intersectionality as a tenet of CRT is minimal (Abrams, 2009; Anderson & McCormack, 2010; Campbell, 2014; Capper, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Solóranzo, 1998; Tate, 1997).

However, for countless years, intersectionality has stood alone as a theoretical framework that many scholars have used as an instrument of analysis, as demonstrated through Kimberlé Crenshaw's work (1989, 1994, 2015). Though intersectionality as a tenet of CRT has overlapping meaning with that of Crenshaw's (1989, 1994, 2015) framework, Crenshaw uses intersectionality as a theoretical framework to analyze Black women's experiences taking into account their gender and race collectively instead of separately, while CRT's tenet of intersectionality holds fast to racism as the primary focus of CRT scholars and their research. This focus does not consider the collective intersections of identities and the various forms of -isms that racial and ethnic minoritized populations must navigate daily. Additionally, both Crenshaw's intersectionality framework and CRT's tenet of intersectionality has an activist component that seeks to forge alliances across various groups to oppose and change the status quo (Gillborn, 2015). CRT has incorporated intersectionality but not in its full complexity and does not

completely illustrate the intersecting identities, oppressions, and experiences of RAEMW

because of its focus on race exclusively. The full complexity is achieved with the

integration of Crenshaw's intersectionality work. The intersecting identities, oppressions,

and experiences that are not being thoroughly portrayed from CRT's tenet of

intersectionality is the reason I am using it in conjunction with Crenshaw's

intersectionality framework to capture all the complexities associated with

intersectionality as it relates to this study. CRT's tenet of intersectionality is a stepping

stone because as time has progressed we have learned that women, especially racial and

ethnic women have complex journeys and experiences within higher education and

society due to their intersecting identities (Abney & Richey, 1991; Alexander & Scott,

1983; Billy, 2019; Cardena, 2016; Chung, 2008; Elenes, 2020; Gallegos, 2012; Garcia,

2020; Gill & Showell, 1991; Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Jean-Marie & Brooks, 2011;

Johnson, 1991; Lopez, 2013; Mella, 2012; Montez, 1998; Moses, 1989; Mosley, 1980;

Nakanishi, 1993; Neilson & Suyemoto, 2009; Nieves-Squires, 1991; Ramos, 2008;

Ramos & Yi, 2020; Roy, 2019; Sanchez-Zamora, 2013; Upadhyay, 2014; Wilking, 2001;

Wolfe & Dilworth, 2015). Together these two theories provide a new perspective on how

RAEMW senior level administrators establish career aspirations and how higher

education policies, and cultures facilitate or hinder their growth. I use two theories to

ground my study to capture all the complex intersecting factors RAEMW senior level

administrators face in their current positions. I utilize four tenets of CRT to analyze the

educational opportunities and inequities that impact their success and advancement. I

utilize Crenshaw's intersectionality framework in conjunction with CRT's tenet of

intersectionality to highlight the unique intersecting experiences of RAEMW senior level

administrators in higher education and how these experiences transformed their interpretation of their reality.

Critical Race Theory (CRT)

It is essential to have a historical point of origin of CRT to provide context for understanding the effectiveness of past strategies in the present climate. CRT first began in the mid-1970s in response to the failures of critical legal studies (CLS) to address the power of race and racism in the U.S. jurisprudence (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Derrick Bell (1995a, 1995b) and Alan Freeman (1977) established the idea that CRT accounts for how racism structures American society and accounts for the racial perspective of minoritized populations. Critical race theorists work to dismantle the invisible system of practices and privileges that the dominant White culture and population have created (Bell, 1995b; Crenshaw et al., 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda, 1995). Using CRT in research, White privilege will be dismantled; simultaneously the experiences, stories, and voices of minority populations will finally be seen and appreciated (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). Unlike other theories that analyze systemic oppression, CRT provides a voice for oppressed minoritized individuals (Hiraldo, 2010). Using CRT as a framework for analyzing counter-stories, interest convergence, and intersectionality of minority administrators may demonstrate the subtle ways in which race and racism are perpetuated.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) noticed how salient race was in U.S. society, yet it remained untheorized within educational scholarship, and they began to use race as an analytic tool in conjunction with socioeconomic status to understand the inequities in schooling and education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). There are three themes of CRT.

The first theme states racism is embedded in the institutional systems that make up American society, including education (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The second theme examines power structures developed from White privilege and White supremacy (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The third theme rejects the tradition of liberalism and meritocracy (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

CRT is used by researchers in various aspects of education, including as a framework for educational research and curriculum, for teaching about the civil rights movements, and for culturally relevant pedagogy (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Farber, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate IV, 1997). CRT has six tenets: 1) counter-storytelling; 2) the permanence of racism; 3) Whiteness as property; 4) interest convergence; 5) the critique of liberalism, and 6) intersectionality (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). Four of the six CRT tenets, counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, interest convergence, and intersectionality were used in this study. The first tenet, counter-storytelling, allows minoritized faculty, staff, and students in higher education to analyze the climate and use their voices to tell their stories of their experiences with marginalization (Decuir & Dixon, 2004; Farber, 1994; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997). Most research has taken a deficit approach, but this study used an anti-deficit approach to tell the counter-stories of RAEMW administrators. The deficit approach does not account for the racist environments that RAEMW administrators are working in. Historically deficit-based work comprises most of the research on or related to RAEMW administrators. By using counter-storytelling, I developed a space to uplift RAEMW voices, perspectives, and experiences. Counter-storytelling was used in this study to expose and critique the

dominant ideology that sustains racial, ethnic, gender, class, and sexual orientation stereotypes experienced by RAEMW senior level administrators. The second tenet, the permanence of racism, reveals how White ideologies and values are at the core of societal policies and cultures that maintain White supremacy (Ladson-Billing, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Picower, 2009). It suggests that the U.S.'s economic, political, and social systems are controlled by racism and acknowledges White privilege and systemic racism as natural parts of the U.S. (Hiraldo, 2010, 2019). The permanence of racism was used in this study to illuminate how racism is manifested in the lives of RAEMW senior level administrators. The third tenet, Whiteness as property, acknowledges that White people are the only ones who possess and benefit from Whiteness (Hiraldo, 2010, 2019). The fourth tenet, interest convergence, acknowledges that racially minoritized people's interests are only addressed when it is in the interest of White people or those in power (Bell, 1995a, 1995b). Interest convergence describes how Black people manage to make political victories despite the racist foundation of American society. Interest convergence was used in this study to analyze the contradictory policies and practices of higher education institutions regarding race, gender, class, and sexual orientation diversity among RAEMW senior level administrators. The progression of RAEMW administrators within higher education will only advance when their interests converge with the interests of White people. The fifth tenet, the critique of liberalism, acknowledges the harm of color blindness, equality for all, and the neutrality of the law (Hiraldo, 2010, 2019). It allows the ignorance of racist policies and practices to sustain inequities. The sixth tenet, intersectionality, acknowledges the interaction between race, gender, class, and sexual orientation that impacts an individual's positioning within larger social structures (Grillo,

1995; Hiraldo, 2010, 2019). CRT asserts that racism is a permanent aspect of life. CRT in education has postulated that minoritized people are often perceived as performing at lower levels than their White counterparts due to systemic racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings, & Tate, 1995).

It is critical to examine not just one form of oppression that minoritized people experience, but the intersecting oppressions they face because of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation that hinder future progress and achievements (Collective, 1983). The Combahee River Collective (1983) in 1974 became the genesis of the idea of intersectionality that captured the unique experiences of Black women. Founded by feminists and lesbians in Boston, Massachusetts, the Combahee River Collective was best known for its Combahee River Collective Statement. The Combahee River Collective Statement of politics proclaims that "we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking" (p. 1). Black women activists, such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells Barnett, have shared the effects that their sexual orientation and gender identity, in conjunction with their racial identity, had in creating a unique political struggle (Collective, 1983). Black women have played a crucial role in stimulating both the civil rights movement and the women's rights movement, yet extraordinarily little is written, taught, or spoken about their unique contributions (Crawford et al., 1993). The Combahee River Collective helped bring the experiences and stories of Black women to light as they have too often gone unnoticed in society.

The Combahee River Collective Statement (1983) promoted consciousness-raising and critiqued sexual oppression in the Black community and racism in the feminist movement. The statement acknowledges the issues Black women endured while organizing because of their multiple oppressions. Understanding these multiple oppressions is critical, yet it is also essential to identify and examine marginalizing practices, processes, spaces, and locations that result from multiple, overlapping forms of oppression and describe them (Solorzano & Villalpando, 1998). Intersectionality is a conceptual approach focused on analyzing these multiple, overlapping forms of oppression in the experiences of minoritized people.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a term that was created by Kimberlé Crenshaw (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1991). According to Crenshaw (2015),

> Intersectionality is an analytic sensibility, a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power. Originally articulated on behalf of Black women, the term brought to light the invisibility of many constituents within groups that claim them as members but often fail to represent them. (paras. 5-6)

It is critical and essential to examine the intersection and interactions of the various identities (race, gender, sexual, and class) of an individual to understand their unique experiences (Carastathis, 2016; Collins, 1991; Crenshaw, 1989). Collins (2015) states the following about intersecting systems of power:

> It catalyzes social formations of complex social inequalities organized via unequal material realities and distinctive social experiences for people who live within

them. The complex social inequalities fostered by intersecting systems of power

are fundamentally unjust, shaping knowledge projects and political engagements

that uphold or contest the status quo. (p.14)

The focus on intersectionality is critical to a study of RAEMW within the PWI academic

context because it gives language to their unique experiences. Crenshaw (1994) discussed

intersectionality, acknowledging Black women and their positions in at least two

subordinate groups. Intersectionality was used in this study to examine the connections

between the racial, ethnic, and gender identities of RAEMW senior level administrators

in relation to power and how those connected identities mold their experiences and can

inform research on RAEMW's experiences as senior level administrators.

Critiques of gender and race-based research are the foundation of

intersectionality. Prior research on gender and race lacked the inclusion of lived

experiences at critical points of intersection where multiple subordinate identities are

found (McCall, 2008). Thus, studies on race and gender typically did not capture the

experiences of Black women but those of White women and Black men (McCall, 2008).

Since Crenshaw's (1994) founding work on intersectionality and Black women, scholars

have expanded the concept of intersectionality to a global perspective. Intersectionality is

a tool of analysis and resistance that emphasizes power related to cultural, structural,

interpersonal, and disciplinary domains (Collins & Bilge, 2016). The intersecting

identities are affected differently within and across domains of power, which is the cause

of societal oppression.

In this study, the domain of power is within higher education institutions. Within these institutions, racial and ethnic minoritized women's opportunities for growth in employment and financial security are determined by their racial, ethnic, gender, class, and sexual identities (Williams, 2001). Understanding how race and gender have shaped those employment opportunities and experiences helps provide a clearer picture of RAEMW in higher education.

Conceptual Framework

I use two theories as lenses to view the issues of race, social class, gender, and sexual orientations and how these forces affect the career development of RAEMW senior level administrators, creating a conceptual framework. I utilize CRT to understand educational inequities linked to access to higher education endured by RAEMW senior level administrators. Specifically, in this study, I use four of the six CRT tenets, counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, interest convergence, and intersectionality. I utilize counter-storytelling to critique the dominant ideology that maintains stereotypes (i.e., racial, gender, class, and sexual orientation) experienced by RAEMW senior level administrators. I utilize the permanence of racism to highlight how racism is manifested in the lives of RAEMW senior level administrators. I utilize interest convergence to analyze the policies and practices of higher education institutions regarding race, gender, class, and sexual orientation diversity among RAEMW senior level administrators. Intersectionality as a tenet of CRT and Crenshaw's Intersectionality framework can extend both theories by providing an interdisciplinary perspective. I utilize intersectionality as a tenet of CRT in conjunction with Crenshaw's intersectionality framework as it specifically focuses on the intersecting identities of participants and

highlights the unique experiences of RAEMW in higher education and how these experiences form their realities while operating within society. Intersectionality broadens the researcher's lens, allowing for a focus on the different experiences of minoritized groups. Combining CRT's tenet of intersectionality with Crenshaw's intersectionality framework provides an interdisciplinary perspective of interlocking forms of oppression and privilege to examine how racism, White privilege, gender privilege, class privilege, sexual privilege, and complex power relations impact women's career experiences. Together these theories captured the holistic and complex experiences of RAEMW senior level administrators and the factors that influence their progression as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework
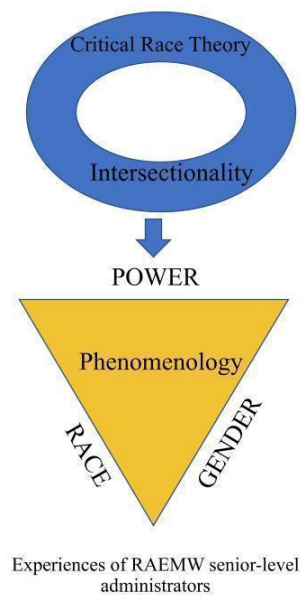
It is clear from the literature that the experiences of RAEMW administrators in higher education have been less than ideal regarding discrimination and exclusion based on race, sex, and class. However, there is a lack of literature on the experiences of RAEMW administrators and how institutions support them. More specifically, there is a lack of voices of RAEMW administrators' experiences and progression in the literature. These two theories provide a deeper understanding of the experiences of RAEMW administrators by emphasizing their stories to improve the experiences and lives of minority populations in higher education.

Summary

The literature provides an overview of the experiences of RAEMW administrators. It is clear from the literature the experiences of RAEMW administrators in higher education have been less than ideal regarding discrimination and exclusion based on racism, sexism, and classism. There is a lack of literature on the progression of RAEMW administrators. CRT and Crenshaw's intersectionality framework can be the foundation that provides a deeper understanding of the experiences of RAEMW administrators by emphasizing characteristics that improve the lives of minoritized populations. The next chapter outlines the methodology that is utilized to better understand the experiences of RAEMW administrators in higher education to add to the knowledge base.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter details the overall methodological approach of the study. First, I discussed the research questions that guide this study. Second, I discuss my positionality, both personal and professional, and my epistemological stance. Third, I discuss the rationale and assumptions of using a qualitative research approach, and phenomenology as a methodology in this research study, and a thorough discussion on the participant selection criteria. Lastly, this chapter concludes with discussion of the data collection process, the interview protocol, the data analysis process, and the ethical considerations, the data quality, and the rigor of the study.

Research Questions

This study is guided by three research questions.

1. How do Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women senior level administrators describe their experiences navigating higher education?

2. How do senior level Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women administrators describe the impact of institutional environments on their career advancement in higher education?

3. How can intersectionality, counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, and interest convergence inform research on Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women's experiences as senior level administrators?

Positionality

I became interested in the general topic of RAEMW's experiences as a graduate student pursuing my master's degree in higher education administration. During this time

one of my college mentors was taking on more RAEMW mentees in higher education (intentionally or unintentionally) creating what I refer to as a Black Girl Magic mentoring group. I was in awe of the person she was and is becoming, co-parenting, working full-time as a higher education professional, being active in her sorority, and mentoring so many racial and ethnic minoritized individuals. As I explored my racial and gender identity in the context of the world and within the academy, I began to see the importance of my presence in higher education. There are not a lot of people who look like me in the field of higher education in senior level positions. The question that crossed my mind is how can my perspectives, experiences, and identities (racial and gender) be represented at these levels in higher education? How can decisions be made on behalf of minoritized students when there are very few racial and ethnic minoritized administrators, specifically women?

I identify as an African American cis woman, with both African and White ancestors (Maternal side); a Christian; a lifelong learner; a researcher; and an adjunct professor. As a racially and ethnically minoritized woman, I struggled with not seeing women like me in various positions in elementary, secondary, and higher education. It appears the further I advance in my educational journey, the fewer RAEMW in higher education I see. Being a Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Woman in higher education conducting research and developing as an academic scholar has had its fair share of challenges. When I started my master's program at Rowan University, I was fortunate enough to receive a graduate assistantship (GA) that exposed me to research in the academy and allowed me to explore areas and topics of interest to me. I took courses that provided opportunities for me to read research about the different experiences that racial

and ethnic minoritized students in higher education go through, though I have some similar experiences of my own. These courses created an opportunity for me to think more critically first about the experiences of racial and ethnic minoritized undergraduate students, then about racial and ethnic minoritized graduate students, and lastly, specifically RAEMW faculty and administrators. This progression of interest began to develop through my exploration of the literature and conversations with faculty and administrators in higher education.

There were a handful of racially and ethnically minoritized professors that I had during my undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral journey who were also women. Now as a Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Woman teaching in higher education and sharing my story with my students, I have begun to hear and see what I have been reading in the literature. Though I have my fair share of White professors with whom I have developed close positive relationships, there was a want and a greater need to see someone like myself teaching me. The interactions with RAEMW in higher education have had the most significance in my life personally, academically, and professionally. It was not until one of those RAEMW mentioned to me that a career in higher education would be a great fit for me that prompted my interest in entering the academy. Although I did not (still do not) see many RAEMW higher education administrators, I wonder how they learned about higher education as a career field, what their experiences were like, and the extent to which they experienced success in those environments.

Epistemological Stance

For this research study, being aware of and acknowledging my positionality allowed me to separate my perspectives on RAEMW's experiences to allow for unbiased

interpretation of the data that is achieved through bracketing and is consistent with a phenomenological approach (Chenail, 2011; Gearing, 2004; Husserl, 2012; Moustakas, 1994). I have little knowledge of the everyday experiences of RAEMW administrators, making it easier for me to compartmentalize my assumptions about their careers and the institutional support that contributes to their success. It is important to note that my early collegiate experiences may be like those of my participants, making it a little difficult to fully separate myself from the study. Furthermore, my epistemological framework is situated in constructionism. Constructionism means that meaning is created from the interplay between the subject and object; the subject constructs the reality of the object (Papert, 1980). Within this study there are two interplays that take place during constructionism, the first is the interplay between the subject (interviewer) and the object (participant) and the second is the interplay between the subject (participant) and the object (their experiences). Constructionism is focused on the construction of meaning and the participant is constructing meaning from their experiences, but meaning is also constructed within the interview (Papert, 1980). The concept of constructionism is tied to my ability to separate myself from the data using bracketing to learn from the data (Gearing, 2004; Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). Thus, bracketing is critical to practice so that the data speaks for itself and that the participants' experiences become the focus of the analysis.

Rationale and Assumptions of Phenomenology

I chose a qualitative research approach based on the nature of the problem and research questions (Creswell, 1998, 2007, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Qualitative research is conducted to understand the complex interactions

of how people encounter specific contexts and settings (Creswell, 1998, 2007, 2013; Creswell & Poth, 2016). Using a qualitative approach provided me with an abundance of insightful data to understand a population and topic that is not easily quantified or measurable in addition to honoring the stories of participants (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative research aims to seek depth rather than breadth in its data. Qualitative data such as personal narratives and counter-storytelling is best suited to capture the nuances of racialized experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Qualitative research connects to the concept of CRT as the purpose of CRT is to shed light on current racial phenomena, advance the conversation about nuanced racial ideas, and dispute racial hierarchies (Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998). To shed light on how racial and ethnic minoritized individuals perceive life in an inequitable society shaped by structural racism, CRT draws on counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, interest convergence, and intersectionality that take the lived experiences of these groups at face value (Castagno & Lee, 2007; Delgado & Stefanic, 2017). Structural racism is defined as the macro-level mechanisms that produce, maintain, and reinforce inequities among racial and ethnic groups (Powell, 2007). CRT understands that structural racism is less visible than individual racism (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Tate, 1997).

CRT in qualitative research fundamentally addresses a social justice agenda that advocates the exclusion of all forms of racial, gender, language, sexuality, and class subordination (Capper, 2015). The tenets of CRT are used in qualitative research as a means of understanding racial subordination and White supremacy (Anderson & McCormack, 2010; Capper, 2015). CRT challenges the association between White supremacy and its links to legalized discrimination and manifestations of implicit and

explicit racism in social and educational contexts (Matsuda, 1995; Parker, 2015).

Methodologically, CRT has been used to gain insight into how racism is operationalized

in educational settings (Castagno & Lee, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Parker, 2015;

Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

CRT research has made important contributions to the academic community,

drawing attention to the inherent racism embedded in social contexts and structures, and

the impact of quality within educational settings that discriminate against racial

conditions and treatments (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Gillborn, 2015; Hiraldo, 2010;

Ladson-Billings, 1998; Parker, 2015; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano &

Yosso, 2002). It provides a way to think about how research can be conducted. It serves

as a data forum for discussing policies, legal actions, or social and political trends and

their impact on racialized communities (Matsuda, 1995; Parker, 2015). By prompting

counter-storytelling, CRT facilitates an investigation on how institutional policies and

structures, as well as cultural norms, operate and influence the decisions and outcomes of

RAEMW administrators (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; Parker, 2015). The literature has

explored the lived experiences of Black women administrators in higher education

(Mosley, 1980), but little is known about career advancement and decision-making

process, institutional supports, and how institutions contribute to the success of RAEMW

senior level administrators. I used a qualitative research method that allows the

participants to provide a comprehensive narrative to better understand the essence from

within. There are five qualitative approaches to inquiry that include case studies,

ethnography, grounded theory, narrative, and phenomenology (Creswell, 2007).

Specifically, I utilized a phenomenological approach in this study.

Phenomenology

According to Creswell (2007), a phenomenological study seeks to understand and describe the essence of a phenomenon by investigating the lived experiences of individuals. Phenomenology is both a mode of philosophical inquiry and a branch of qualitative research (Creswell, 1998, 2007, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2007, 2014, 2016). Phenomenology describes the essence of a phenomenon that leads to understanding deeper aspects of a lived experience (Creswell, 1998, 2007, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2007, 2014, 2016). Phenomenology empowers people and promotes an understanding of their lived experiences by allowing others to experience the phenomenon vicariously, which is achieved through thick description (Creswell, 1998, 2007, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2007, 2014, 2016). Thick description is a qualitative research method used in the social sciences that provides in-depth descriptions and interpretations of circumstances that the researcher has observed (Creswell, 1998, 2007, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2007, 2014, 2016). Through thick descriptions, readers should understand the essence of the underpinning phenomenon. Using the voices of the participants allowed me to fully understand the phenomenon and provide recommendations for changes and improvements. Phenomenology is oriented in theory, but not driven by theory, and this is how it is oriented within the study (Cohen, 1987; Edie, 1984; Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014; Koopman, 2015; Moran,

2002; Moustakas, 1994; Sokolowski, 2000; van Manen, 2007, 2014, 2016).

Phenomenology focuses on the wholeness of experience, a search for the essences of experiences, and viewing experiences and behavior as an integrated and inseparable relationship of subject and object (Cohen, 1987; Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Sokolowski, 2000; van Manen, 2007, 2014, 2016). For this study, the phenomenon consists of the experiences of senior level RAEMW administrators at 4-year PWIs of higher education in the U.S. Specifically, a transcendental phenomenological approach was used in this study to focus more on the description of the participants' experiences and less on the interpretations of the researcher (Moustakas, 1994).

Transcendental Phenomenology

Transcendental phenomenology by Edmund Husserl is the foundation of all other phenomenological methods. Edmund Husserl came from a background of science and mathematics and shifted to education and philosophy (Creswell, 1998, 2007, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2007, 2014, 2016). Husserl believed that the world and the human consciousness are one and must be studied as such (Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014). Transcendental phenomenology is a descriptive approach, and the observer is detached. The lived experience in transcendental phenomenology goes through a reflection process and transcendental reduction was used to reveal the essence, or roots, of a phenomenon (Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014). Meaning is the core of transcendental phenomenology designed to gain and collect data that explain the essences of human experiences (Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014). A

transcendental approach uses systematic procedures consistent with balancing both the objective and subjective approaches to acknowledge and detail, rigorous data analysis steps (Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014). Transcendental phenomenology uses a technique of epoche/bracketing (Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014), which uses bracketing to see the world more objectively.

Bracketing

The concept of bracketing was used to acknowledge preconceptions and assumptions about a particular experience to see other experiences objectively (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; Starks et al., 2007). Bracketing is a practice for uncovering personal and theoretical assumptions to put aside presumptions (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; Starks et al., 2007). Using bracketing, I was able to engage with the data and the evolving findings. Bracketing occurred throughout the research process and is not confined to data collection and analysis (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; Starks et al., 2007). Reflexivity is an activity that was used throughout the bracketing process to identify potential influences and biases (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing strategies are used by the researcher to ensure that findings are as close as possible to what the participants mean (Chan et al., 2013). For this study, I used existential bracketing, setting aside my internal suppositions (Gearing, 2004).

Existential Bracketing. The founders of existential bracketing included Jaspers (1971) and Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964, 1968). However, the philosophical founders were credited to Heidegger (1962, 1972), Husserl (1913/1931, 1970, 1999), and Scheler (1970, 1973, 1980). Existential bracketing encompasses the changes made throughout the

phenomenological movement (Chan et al., 2013; Gearing, 2004; Husserl, 2012). The

evolution of bracketing focused on the realignment of its fundamental elements and was a

critical shift from earlier forms of phenomenological bracketing (Chan et al., 2013;

Gearing, 2004; Husserl, 2012). There are seven phases of existential bracketing that

include abstract formulation, research praxis, internal (researcher) supposition, external

(phenomenon) supposition, temporal structure, parenthesis (boundaries) composition, and

reintegration/unbracketing and investment (Gearing, 2004). The abstract formulation

phase provides two epistemological positions that researchers can take which include

interpretative and critical. Likewise, the ontology of existential bracketing is between a

critical or relativism approach. Internal suppositions stem from the researcher while

external suppositions relate to the phenomenon. The temporal structure (known as the

parenthesis) is created loosely to enable the research to explore the phenomenon on its

own. The parenthesis provides boundaries for setting aside the assumptions of the

researcher. Reintegration or unbracketing is the process that allows for several factors

and influences impacted by the data to be presented within the overall research study

(Gearing, 2004).

In summation, a qualitative phenomenological approach is best situated for this

study as phenomenological studies focus on the essence and its meaning as it relates to

identity and individual perceptions (Creswell, 1998, 2007, 2013; Creswell & Creswell,

2017; Husserl, 2012; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2007, 2014, 2016). Phenomenology

is a meaningful way to describe a phenomenon that cannot be quantified easily (Creswell,

2013). Describing an experience is the first step toward a better understanding. The

strength of phenomenology as a method is the way that it is expressed in terms of real-life

people sharing their experiences with the phenomenon while also opening and extending

conversations that push the boundaries of what we know and what we still need to

understand (Creswell, 1998, 2007, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Husserl, 2012;

Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2007, 2014, 2016). Through this study, I hope to

contextualize and understand the career advancement of RAEMW senior level

administrators and how institutional environments impact their success.

Population and Participants

The target population for this study was RAEMW senior level administrators who

are currently working at Predominately White Institutions (PWIs) of higher education in

the U.S. I define RAEMW administrators as "groups that are different in race, religious

creed, nation of origin, sexuality, and gender and as a result of social constructs have less

power or representation compared to other members or groups in society" (Smith, 2016).

In the context of this study, RAEMW consist of Asian, Black, and Latinx women who

may also identify as biracial. Participants were only recruited from 4-year PWIs because

46.7% of administrators are women (as shown in Table 1) and of that percentage

RAEMW compromise 5.9% or less across women administrators (as shown in Table 2) at

PWIs (Schmidt, 2020). Within higher education this lack of RAEMW administrators'

presence at PWIs is an issue as it shows that there is an absence of diverse perspectives at

the administrative level, which influences the decisions being made about the operations

and composition of the institution (Austin, 1984; Logue & Anderson, 2001; Maestas et

al., 2007; Milliken, 1990; Roby et al., 2013; Strange & Banning, 2001). The lack of

RAEMW administrators reflects the scarcity of racial and ethnic minoritized faculty

within the institution. Studies have shown that students perform better when the faculty's

racial and ethnic identities match that of the student population (Johnson, 1991; Milliken, 1990; Moses, 1989; Mosley, 1980; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Schmidt, 2020). Similarly, having campus administrators whose identities match students' identities may positively affect students' experiences. A diverse workforce attracts diverse students and drives revenue, innovation, and performance, which all are impacted by the decisions administrators make related to policies and procedures (Austin, 1984; Collins & Kritsonis, 2006; Doyle, 2020; Golde, 2019; Logue & Anderson, 2001; Luedke, 2017; Maestas et al., 2007; Milliken, 1990; Roby et al., 2013; Schmidt, 2020; Smith et al., 2004; Strange & Banning; Tuitt et al., 2007; U. S. Department of Education et al., 2016). Thus, hearing the voices and learning about the experiences of RAEMW administrators at PWIs may provide a better understanding of how they navigate within institutions of higher education. Having this knowledge may assist in bolstering the number of RAEMW administrators at PWIs and help racial and ethnic minoritized faculty and students.

Studies have shown that the typical participant size in a phenomenology study is one to ten participants (Creswell, 1998; Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The study included seven participants that included two Asian, three Black, and two Latinx senior level women administrators. Research has shown that there is a small percentage of RAEMW administrators in higher education and that percentage is even smaller for senior level administrators at PWIs (Schmidt, 2020). Each of these women within and across the three racial and ethnic groups would allow for triangulation (Armstrong et al., 1997; Denzin, 2007, 2012). In qualitative research triangulation is the use of multiple methods or data sources that develops a comprehensive understanding of the

phenomenon (Armstrong et al., 1997; Denzin, 2007, 2012; Patton, 1999, 2002). Four

types of triangulations include method triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory

triangulation, and data source triangulation (Armstrong et al., 1997; Denzin, 2007, 2012;

Patton, 1999, 2002). Data source triangulation refers to the collection of data from

different individuals, groups, families, and communities (Armstrong et al., 1997; Denzin,

2007, 2012; Patton, 1999, 2002). I utilized data source triangulation to gather information

about this phenomenon and use the participant interviews for each of the racial and ethnic

groups within and across groups to gain multiple perspectives and validation of data.

Capturing the journeys of seven RAEMW senior level administrators, three Black, two

Asian, and two Latinx allowed for a better understanding and triangulation of the essence

of the entire group, thus providing a balance both within and across groups (Armstrong et

al., 1997; Denzin, 2007, 2012; Patton, 1999, 2002). Participants were recruited through

purposeful and snowball sampling to ensure that information is obtained from RAEMW

administrators who are knowledgeable about and experienced with the topic being

studied (Patton, 2002). A recruitment email was sent to various higher education

professional organizations (e.g., The American Association of University Women

(AAUW), The American Council on Education (ACE) Women Network, The National

Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education, The American Association of

University Administrators) via Listserv, emails directly sent to participants that meet the

requirements, and a recruitment flyer posted on social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram,

LinkedIn etc.). The eligibility requirements to participate in this study include the

following: currently working as a senior level administrator, as defined in chapter 1 for at

least one year, at a 4-year PWI in the U.S., self-identify as a RAEMW, specifically

Asian, Black, and Latinx women who may also identify as biracial, and were willing to share their experiences.

Data Collection

This section describes the types of data I collected. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), data collection includes interviewing, observing, shadowing, as well as document and artifact collection to gain a better understanding of the participants and give voice to their experiences. Gathering data on lived experiences is best done through the process of interviewing. I collected data through interviews and Curriculum Vitae (CVs) and other forms of public information (such as LinkedIn, institutional websites, and news sources) which served as sources for triangulation, creating a rich source of information to help understand the lived experiences of RAEMW senior level administrators (Armstrong et al., 1997; Birks et al., 2008; Denzin, 2007, 2012; Glense, 2006; Janesick, 1999; Patton, 1999, 2002). For this study, interviewing is the primary form of data collection.

Data Types

All participants reviewed and submitted their informed and audio consent forms. The data collection process consisted of one-on-one audiotaped interviews, participant's Curriculum Vitae (CVs), public documents, a research journal, and memos (Birks et al., 2008). Journaling is a reflective process that entails writing down my field notes such as a detailed description of observations (i.e., attitude, environment, and body language of participants), my assumptions, and impressions (Coylar, 2009; Glesne, 2006). Memos reflect the researcher's thought process in connecting and interpreting the data recorded in the field notes (Birks et al., 2008). The journal and memos were used to cross-

reference data during the data analysis process. My researcher's journal was a platform to record an in-depth description of the progression of the study and for continuous self-reflection (Glense, 2006; Janesick, 1999). I also practiced bracketing during my journal reflections to ensure that I was being objective by acknowledging my assumptions and preconceptions (Gearing, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; Starks et al., 2007). I also used it to help interpret meaning from the lived experiences of senior level RAEMW administrators.

Creswell (1998) claims that between five and 25 interviews are sufficient for a phenomenology study. This study included seven 60–90-minute interviews, one for each participant via video (e.g., FaceTime, Zoom, Google Hangout, Webex, etc.). Research has revealed that senior level RAEMW administrators are few and are often extremely busy thus a one-hour interview would be sufficient to gather relevant information (Chung, 2009; Clark et al., 1999; Cotter et al., 2001; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Garcia, 2020; Jarmon, 2014; Sorensen, 2015; Upadhyay, 2014; Whitford, 2020; Wolfgang & Dilworth, 2015). Advantages of video interviews include that they increase efficient use of resources (human and economic), they improve the quality of data collection, they minimize disadvantages (reduce response bias and participants' nervousness when note taking, and create openness in participants' responses), they reduce interview effects, they provide safety to the researcher, and they produce faster results (Brannen, 1988; Knox & Burkard, 2009; Musselwhite et al., 2007; Shuy, 2003). I provided individuals who meet the criteria with a consent to participate form and an audio recording consent form. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed and pseudonyms were provided to all participants (Iacono et al., 2016).

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol was piloted with several individuals who closely met the criteria for the study. The interview had demographic questions, and questions related to higher education experiences, career experiences, and institutional environments. I used a semi-structured interview protocol to capture the lived experiences of RAEMW senior level administrators. Semi-structured interviews use open-ended questions based on the focus of the study to collect specific data for comparison but remain open to probing an individual's stories for more detail (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Knox & Burkard, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). Interviews that are semi-structured allow for creativity and flexibility to fully uncover each participant's story. Standardized interviews inhibit the participants from telling their unique experiences. Semi-structured interview questions prompted participants to share background information about their career experiences as RAEMW senior level administrators in the academy and the factors that influenced their decision to become an administrator. The last section of questions was on participants' experiences with institutions and whether and how they fostered environments of validation, support, and success for RAEMW senior level administrators. The interview protocol consisted of questions geared toward stimulating conversation specific to the participants identifying as RAEMW senior level administrators, experiences navigating their position, the impact of an institutional environment on their success and advancement, and the effect of their intersecting identities (gender and race) on their experiences (see Appendix A).

The relationship between the interviewer and participant is the most important aspect of qualitative research as the quality of the relationship affects participants' self-disclosure that gathers in-depth information (Knox & Burkard, 2009). Participants'

characteristics, reasons, and motivation for participating in the study influence the

interview process and relationship (Knox & Burkard, 2009). However, there are factors

that cause participants to withhold information, including a non-responsive interviewer

and an interviewer who is not forthcoming and validating to promote participant

disclosure (Knox & Burkard, 2009). The level of disclosure is impacted by emotions

experienced while sharing past encounters, the level of vulnerability, as well as using

coping management strategies (Knox & Burkard, 2009). The characteristics and

processes of the interviewer are also important to the interview. The interviewer must be

knowledgeable and skillful in the process of interviewing (Knox & Burkard, 2009). An

interviewer must be careful not to minimize the feelings of the participant, be sure to

respond to the intense emotions of the participant and know how to pivot the

conversation when necessary if the conversation is not going as planned. As a result, the

participant may withdraw from the lack of response. The interviewer must also be aware

of and manage their own reactions to respond appropriately, avoid therapeutic responses

to participants, as it can be confusing and influence the participant's interpretation of the

event, and encourage elaboration (Knox & Burkard, 2009).

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2013), the data analysis process includes the creation,

organization of transcripts, and the emergence of themes from the coding protocol that is

then presented in various forms. Data analysis in qualitative research is a cyclic process

of collecting and analyzing data until comprehension of the data collected is achieved

(Creswell, 2013; Saldaña, 2013). The interviews were transcribed verbatim for data

analysis (Moustakas, 1994; Saldana, 2013). I used Moustakas' (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method to analyze the data.

First, the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method starts out with the researcher's Epoche, which sets aside prejudice, judgment, and views the phenomenon with a fresh perspective (Moustakas, 1994). I wrote down my prejudice and judgment to acknowledge them and then view the phenomenon with an unbiased perspective. Next, transcendental-phenomenological reduction occurred that considers the phenomenon from different perspectives, identifies units of meaning, and develops textual description of the phenomenon, often termed as coding (Saldana, 2013). For the first round of codes, I hand coded each interview. Afterwards I compiled the list of codes for each interview into an excel document to see which codes were common among all the interviews. I then consolidated some of the codes that were similar and re-coded each interview with the finalized list of common codes. Then, from the textual description, a structural (the how) description of the experience is constructed. Creating the structural description requires creativity and insight to express the relationship (themes) important to the experience. Then a synthesis of both the textual and structural descriptions was used to form a textual-structural description that develops a synthesis of the meaning and essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). For each code I compiled a list of the associated quotes for each interview and developed an essence of the phenomenon experienced by the participants. Last, the textual structural descriptions are combined into a composite description representing the essence of experience of the whole group (Moustakas, 1994). All these steps were repeated until data saturation was reached. Records of the

transcriptions and the coding process constitute an audit trail of the data analysis procedure.

Ethical Considerations, Data Quality, and Rigor

Before collecting any data, an application from Rowan University's electronic, Institutional Research Board (eIRB) was completed outlining all the aspects of the study and approved. All participants and institutions were provided with a pseudonym to protect their identity. In qualitative research there are two primary strategies that promote the quality and rigor of the research that include authenticity and trustworthiness (Grant & Lincoln, 2021; Lincoln, 1995; Whittemore et al., 2001). Authenticity of the data refers to the quality of the data and data collection procedures. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that authenticity is a fair representation of differing viewpoints on the topic. In this study, to ensure authenticity I utilized the process of member checking (Creswell, 2013). Trustworthiness of the analysis refers to the quality of data analysis that relies on an ethical system (Grant & Lincoln, 2021; Lincoln, 1995; Whittemore et al., 2001). To assess trustworthiness the following criteria was used: Fairness/Balance (Equity of stakeholder representations), Ontological Authenticity (Knowledge of self-revealed), Education Authenticity (Stakeholder knowledge grows), Catalytic Authenticity (Stakeholder agency develops), and Tactical Authenticity (Stakeholder learns self-sufficiency) (Grant & Lincoln, 2021; Lincoln, 1995; Whittemore et al., 2001). Creswell and Poth (2018) claim that trustworthiness is a qualitative equivalent to validation, ensuring the authenticity and accuracy of the researcher and the research process.

The quality of data can also be assessed with the same broad concepts of validity and relevance used in quantitative research (Morse et al., 2002). Validation strategies

include triangulation, member checking, research bias, and rich, thick description

(Armstrong et al., 1997; Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Whittemore et al., 2001). Lincoln and Guba (1985) examined research validity and have identified four major concepts in defining and investigating quality in qualitative studies, including credibility, dependability (stability), transferability (context-embeddedness), and confirmability. The credibility (plausibility) of a research study is establishing that the findings are the actual representation of the participant's stories (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Whittemore et al., 2001). In this study, to ensure credibility, I utilized the process of member checking, and participants had an opportunity to review a copy of their interview to provide an accurate and authentic representation of their voices within the study (Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Treharne & Riggs, 2014; Whittemore et al., 2001). When a study's findings are reflective of reality, it is credible. The dependability of a research study allows for future replication with the hopes of achieving the same or similar findings. In this study, I utilized dependability (stability) by being reflective and journaling (Chenail, 2011) before and after the interview to examine opinions and impressions that appeared during the interview, which might bias the collection and analysis. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that transferability (context-embeddedness) is the ability to use the findings from one study to apply them to broader contexts and generalize. In this study, I ensured transferability by providing thick, rich descriptions of the experiences of participants to help readers develop a better understanding and help with its application to other aspects of higher education. Lastly, confirmability (value

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expectation, triangulation) is the level at which the findings can be confirmed by others (Armstrong et al., 1997; Creswell, 2013; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Whittemore et al., 2001). In this study, to ensure confirmability, I developed a self-critical attitude, journaling to keep in account how my personal feelings, perceptions, and biases might influence the collection and analysis of the study. These are not all the criteria for evaluating the quality of qualitative research, but these are the ones that are specifically used in this study.

Summary

In summary, this study used phenomenology to better understand the experiences of RAEMW senior level administrators at a U.S. 4-year PWIs. This study followed Husserl (1999, 2012) transcendental phenomenological approach to highlight the description of the participants' experiences and less on the interpretations of the researcher to present the essence of the phenomenon. Bracketing is the technique that was used in transcendental phenomenology that allows for preconceptions to be set aside and as a method to demonstrate the validity of a study (Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This approach answered the three main research questions: How do Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women senior level administrators describe their experiences navigating higher education? How do senior level Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women administrators describe the impact of institutional environments on their career advancement in higher education? How can intersectionality, counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, and interest convergence inform research on Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women's experiences as administrators? In this chapter, I have explained the study's methodological design

including the research questions, positionality, epistemological stance, rationale and assumptions of phenomenology, data collection, data analysis, ethical considerations, data quality, and rigor. The following chapter presents the findings.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of senior level RAEMW administrators who work in U.S. 4-year PWIs and analyze the impact of institutional environments on their success. The research questions that guided this study were: 1) How do Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women senior level administrators describe their experiences navigating higher education?, 2) How do senior level Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women administrators describe the impact of institutional environments on their career advancement in higher education?, and 3) How can intersectionality, counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, and interest convergence inform research on Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women's experiences as senior level administrators? This study used a qualitative transcendental phenomenological descriptive approach that involved a profound journey into the lived experience of the participants through a process of reflection and transcendental reduction to reveal the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998, 2007, 2013; Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 2007, 2014, 2016). This approach involved interviews with RAEMW senior level administrators, specifically those who identified as Asian, Black/African American, and Latinx to get to the essence of what it is to be one of a very select few higher education administrators who are on the cabinet at PWIs within the U.S. (Husserl, 1999, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014).

Data Collection and Analysis Overview

This study used interviews as the primary source of data collection along with other sources. The data collection process consisted of one-on-one audio and video

recorded interviews with participants, a research journal, research memos, and public information such as Curriculum Vitae (CV), LinkedIn, Institutional webpages, and news sources which served as sources for triangulation (Armstrong et al., 1997; Birks et al., 2008; Denzin, 2007, 2012; Glense, 2006; Janesick, 1999; Patton, 1999, 2002). Each interview was transcribed verbatim. Before the data analysis process began each interview transcription was reviewed for accuracy. The data analysis process used was Moustakas (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen phenomenological approach. First, addressing the researcher's Epoche, I put aside my preconceptions about the phenomenon being studied. I intentionally set aside my preconceptions via bracketing before, during, and after the interviews using my journal (Moustakas, 1994). Second, in transcendental-phenomenological reduction, I reviewed the phenomenon from various angles, finding meaningful units and creating a textual description of the phenomenon, also known as coding (Saldaña, 2013). Each interview was coded by hand. After that, I used the textual description to generate a structural description of the experience, which explains how the phenomenon occurs and what themes are relevant to it. Then, I integrated the textual and structural descriptions to produce a textual-structural description that captures the meaning and essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). I repeated these steps for each participant until no new data emerged, also known as data saturation (Guest et al., 2006; Moustakas, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). Finally, I synthesized the textual-structural descriptions into a composite description that reflects the essence of the experience for the participants.

Participants

      This study consisted of a total of seven participants. The seven participants included three Black/African American women, two Latinx women, and two Asian women. Studies indicated that the representation of RAEMW administrators in higher education is limited, and this underrepresentation is even more pronounced among senior level administrators at PWIs (Schmidt, 2020). Based on this information it was challenging to find these women and schedule an hour-long interview with them. The high demand and large portfolio that these women have made it extremely difficult for them to find the time to get involved with projects outside of their roles and responsibilities (Austin, 1984; Geary, 2016). However, even with only seven of the originally proposed nine participants, I was still able to achieve data source triangulation (Armstrong et al., 1997; Denzin, 2007, 2012; Patton, 1999, 2002). These seven women are all senior level administrators who have at least one year experience currently working at a PWI within the U.S. and hold a seat on the cabinet. The socioeconomic status of the participants ranges from middle class to upper middle class. The institutional types that these participants work at include public and private and their Carnegie Classifications include Master's Colleges and University, Larger Programs; Doctoral/Professional Universities; Doctoral Universities, High Research Activity; Doctoral Universities, Very High Research Activity; and Special Focus 4-year Arts, Music & Design School. Table 3 highlights the demographic information of the seven participants.

Table 3

Participants Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Race & Ethnicity	Title	Institutional Type
Edith	Black/African American	Chief Officer for Diversity and Inclusion	Public; Doctoral/Professional University
Dorothy	Black/African American	Chief Equity and Diversity Officer	Public; Master's Colleges & Universities, Larger Programs
Angie	Black/African American	Executive Director for the Office of Grants and Sponsored Project	Private; Master's Colleges & Universities, Larger Programs
Brenda	Asian	Director of the Intercultural Center and Advisor to the President on Diversity and Inclusion	Private; Master's Colleges & Universities, Larger Programs
Catherine	Latinx	Senior Vice President of Human Resources	Public; Doctoral Universities, High Research Activity
Fabiola	Asian	Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion	Public; Doctoral Universities, High Research Activity
Gloria	Latinx	Vice President of Student Affairs	Private; special focused 4-year, Arts, Music & Design School

Profiles of the Participants

The profiles of the participants are composed of demographic information that include their socioeconomic status, racial and ethnicity identity, religion or belief, family

dynamic (e.g., immediate family unit, spouse, kids, etc.), other related-demographic

information, and a description of how they began their career in higher education.

Edith

Edith's socioeconomic status is middle class. She described her racial and ethnic

identity as, "Well, I identify as a Black/African American woman, but you know we are

not strictly one race. So, I am a mix of whatever my ancestors were, but I currently

identify as an African American woman." When it comes to her family dynamic and

religion or belief Edith proclaimed "Well, I'm a single parent. I don't really ascribe to any

particular religion, and that's it, I guess." She works as the Chief Officer for Diversity and

Inclusion at a Public Doctoral/Professional University. Edith explained her decision to

begin a career in higher education,

> Ooh, that goes all the way back to when I was a teenager. I grew up in the '60s,
> which probably, at your age, you read about in the history books. I was watching
> it on TV, Martin Luther King, all of that. Vietnam War, the protests, the hippie
> movement, all of that. I came of age during that time, so that had a lot of influence
> on me.

She stated, "So I went on to get a 4-year degree majoring in sociology, minoring in child

development, family relations, and then went on from there [gaining social work

experiences], and eventually, I ended up where I am right now." Edith shared how she

got to where she is now and stated,

> How did I get [to become a senior level administrator]? By moving around from
> institution to institution, because [of] the type of position I hold, there's not

necessarily a ladder where you go from assistant to associate, to director to chief,

to whatever at the same institution. So, in order to really move to the next level,

you're usually ... getting different kinds of experience and a much broader

experience, you're usually moving to a different institution.

Edith also expressed how her advancement in higher education is not directly influenced

by the institutional environment in which she works but by the experiences she

encountered due to her visible intersectional identity. She stated, "Well, I don't think it's

so much [the] institutional environments, as it is with situations that occur at a particular

institution [due to my identity]." Lastly, Edith's profile on her institutional website

highlights how she has over 25 years of experience working as a higher education

administrator in both public and private research universities.

Dorothy

Dorothy is an upper middle-class Black/African American woman, who is

Methodist but grew Baptist in the Episcopal faith. She is married to her husband with a

14-year-old son and works as the Chief Equity and Diversity Officer at a Public Master's

College. Dorothy is a first-generation student and stated, "I'm a proud first-generation

double first generation being that I'm a first-generation American [and] the first in my

family to be born in the United States." The development and establishment of Dorothy's

background identity was critical to shaping her educational experiences. Dorothy's

Caribbean identity shaped her work ethic and drive to advance her education as education

was highly valued in her family and she stated,

Just the work, the work ethic for my family, having [a] Caribbean background.

You know my younger brother and I use [to] joke all the time where you know,

most parents or classmates that we have, their parents would just say, you know,

just finish up high school. Your goal was to finish up high school, and maybe we

hope that you would want to go to college. There was no question with my family

that not only were we going to college, but that we were getting a master's

degree.

Dorothy's decision to begin a career in higher education started when she was working in

the Governor's office as an employee relations coordinator. As the employee relations

coordinator she explained,

I was assigned to oversee the AFT [American Federation of Teachers]. And in

that role, when there were any disputes or concerns if the union and management

at the state colleges were in disagreement, that was where I stepped in as the state

coordinator.

While in this role Dorothy had to travel to colleges to be the mediator between the

management and unions to develop ideas to foster a collaborative relationship and

proclaimed, "I really fell in love with higher ed, and just visiting the colleges and really

saw myself working in higher ed." Dorothy stated that she "I had a great relationship with

my boss at the time…so when an opening came up at [my current institution] ... [my

boss] thought it might be a good opportunity for me." It was in this role as an employee

relations coordinator that she was made aware about her current position and professed

that, "So, I applied and got the position and just fell in love with higher ed ever since."

Then she explained that the former president at her current institution,

> He called me into his office and I'm sure that he's been hearing great things about
> me and that he was in the process of creating an office of equity, diversity,
> inclusion, and compliance and wanting me to head up as the chief diversity
> officer. So, [my] mind [was] blown because [being a chief diversity officer] was
> not my plan.

Before providing the president her response, Dorothy asked for some time to think about
it and she came back to him and stated, "I would take it on a condition… that I would be
able to get funding to go to conferences, to really learn about the role of a CDO [Chief
Diversity Officer]." This was a new role to Dorothy, and she professed that "I did not
want to take on this position, just in name." Having the opportunities to attend
conferences and events allowed Dorothy a chance to speak with other CDOs that shared
with her how "…it was like having a fight to convince college presidents that this should
be a cabinet level, a higher-level position where a lot of chief diversity officers report to a
provost or, you know, report on a lower level." To this very day Dorothy is happy to have
a seat at the table and asserted that "...having that opportunity to actually sit at the table
and engage in those necessary conversations, I think really makes a difference, right?"
Lastly, Dorothy's LinkedIn profile highlights her almost ten years of experience moving
up in leadership roles at her institution until she reached senior cabinet level status as an
administrator in higher education.

Angie

Angie shared her socioeconomic status and stated "I'm middle upper class and I realize that there's a lot of privilege. I understand the privilege and with privilege comes responsibility." Angie lives by the value her mother instilled in her which was "to be a lady and I always try to, you know, as Michelle Obama says, you know when they go low you go high." She described her racial and ethnic identity as "Black Black…and by Black, I mean I'm not mixed with nothing." Angie also described her religion or belief and said,

> And religion I consider myself to be Unitarian, and the reason why I consider myself to be Unitarian is because I was born and baptized as Catholic. I moved to Liberia, and we were Muslim, and it's just been a mishmash of religions. So, on my quest, I decided that Unitarian Universalist really matches who I am, because there's some good in all religions, even though I don't consider myself to be a religious person. I, yeah, I don't really like the structures of religion and all the other stuff that goes along with it.

She is a mom of two adult children and a divorcee. Angie was born and raised in the city in which she is currently working as the Executive Director for the Office of Grants and Sponsored Project at a Private Master's University. She revealed that "I really stumbled into higher education. I had an aunt that worked for the city of New York back in the eighties" who was aware of jobs working for the city. Angie explained, "…so if you know anything about [the city], you know, having a city job…is like the thing to have like, you know, it's like stability." She shared how "I applied to a bunch of these jobs;

this job called me. I had no idea [what I was going] to be interviewed for, [so] I went.

They offered me the job. And I was like, okay, the people seem nice, I guess I'll take the

job and I ended up [working at a city college] for 34 years." Lastly, Angie's LinkedIn

profile highlights her nearly four-decade career as a senior level administrator across

multiple institutions of higher education and over a decade of mentorship experiences and

achievements.

Brenda

Brenda shared that her socioeconomic status is middle class but stated "I grew up

working class, so [I] grew up in poverty. I would say, I guess I'm upwardly mobile now

in adulthood, so I would say middle class." She was recruited because my understanding

was through email that she identified as an Asian woman, but during the interview

Brenda revealed that she identified as being multiracial and stated "I'm Jamaican, Indian

as in South Asian, and Italian as in White. I'm Black, White, and Asian." As a result,

Brenda was considered one of the Asian participants in the study. Brenda stated, "I do not

have a particular religious practice, although I grew up Baptist." She is a first-generation

college student, and shared "I am queer, so I'm married to my wife, and we have no kids

except for my dog." Brenda works as the Director of the Intercultural Center and Advisor

to the President on Diversity and Inclusion at a Private Master's University. The

institution's student-run newspaper highlighted that Brenda was the first director of their

identity center. Brenda's decision to begin a career in higher education she shared, "it

was not my intent." Her plan was "to be a high school history teacher. That was my

favorite subject, and that was what my intentions were." Brenda was a presidential

scholar who was able to attend college for free but had separated living facilities from the

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majority of the first-year students, which caused her to "[struggle] to find community at that time… and to find [grounding]." She stated, "I got involved with [student organizations] just to find [a sense of] community to kinda like survive because history was a really White major and male major." She also took on leadership positions within those student organizations. After a while Brenda started to work in the identity center where she learned about the field of higher education and stated,

> I made the decision; I think my junior year... No, it might've been my senior year to not finish out my last semester, to do my extra semester to do student teaching, to instead go to graduate school for higher education and student affairs.

Her desire to work in identity-centric centers or cultural centers from her undergraduate experiences was the catalyst that caused her to "[fall] into student affairs because I needed some grounding in my own college experience."

Brenda shared her experiences and said,

> I mean, I think I've been at institutions that [were either] one of two things. [They] really, really valued the work that I do and/or the work that I was attempting [to do] or really didn't have a lot of knowledge about what to do. Never in the middle, never kind of invested or kind of knowledgeable, either really invested or really not knowledgeable. I think both of those environments are ones where the work is needed, I guess is the easiest way to say that. [At my prior institution] I felt like the institution was really invested. We had a lot of resources. Probably not enough, but a lot of resources for the work that we did. We were well respected in the type of centers that we created.

Lastly, Brenda also shared how her presence at her institution has impacted its institutional environment and professed,

> I'd like to say my presence has been helpful, but I mean, institutions are such slow changing [entities]. I think that in small ways there's been some real important shifts, too, in addition to the big things that get articles written about, like changing our main campus building name and removing the racist name that was attached to it and the funding for the grant program that I mentioned. I think there's big and small ways. I don't think it's enough. I don't think any institution has reached a place of, "We got this," actually. I just think that we'll continue to improve. Where it will show is in our recruitment and retention of all... Not just our students and the giving back [institutions perform]. [I mean] looking back on this employment experience or this campus experience, student experience with fondness of that memory and not... More fondness than harm.

Catherine

Catherine is an upper middle class Hispanic woman but stated "I don't have any one racial identity because I am super-duper de-multiracial. Okay, I have European, I have African, I have Native American, I have all kinds, so I don't identify with any one race." She is a non-practicing Catholic and proclaimed to be "more spiritual than religious." She is a first-generation college student, married to her husband, has two adult children, and works as the Senior Vice President of Human Resources at a Public Doctoral/Professional University. Catherine's decision to begin a career in higher education she shared was not "a decision as much as something that just everything fell

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in the right place, if you will." As an undergraduate student Catherine was a student worker and applied for a competitive internship at her university. She had an advantage and expressed,

> the people in charge of the department where I worked… never came to work and didn't do stuff, so they had the students very well-trained. So, when I competed for this student internship, I knew more about university policy.

Catherine got an internship in Human Resources (HR) because she asserted that she was "uniquely qualified and knowledgeable about university practice and policy." Catherine also stated that she can get "bore[d] easily" and so HR had various components that included,

> …the legal pieces, there were the technical pieces around compensation and human resource information systems and information technology, and then there were the legal pieces around labor and employee relations and the training components. So, you could really just tie all of those together and have a pretty interesting job that you would not typically have in other areas, so that was of great interest to me.

Then she applied to the MBA program and got a fellowship which allowed her to stay in HR, "and pretty much the rest is history. So, it was an interesting job." Catherine's background shaped her identity, beliefs, values, and commitment to public higher education, and she expressed,

> Just a little bit about my background, I grew up in [a city in New York]. My siblings and I are first-generation college [students]…three of us went to public

institutions of higher education. So, I do believe that public institutions of higher

education are the engine to social mobility. It certainly made a difference in our

lives, a phenomenal difference in our lives. So, I believe that my commitment to

public higher education is part of my paying it back and creating opportunities for

those that come after me. So that's higher education in particular, because higher

education is really a wonderful pathway to upward mobility and advancement.

Though Catherine wholeheartedly believes in the power of public institutions of higher

education, as a senior level administrator she expressed that "...as people of color,

women, you have to leave part of who you are at the door in order to exist in this

environment." Lastly, Catherine's LinkedIn profile highlights her almost three decades of

experience across three different institutions working her way up the administrative level

to her present position being a senior level administrator on the cabinet at her institution.

Fabiola

Fabiola is an upper middle class Asian Filipina American woman who is Roman

Catholic. She is married to her husband (a Nigerian man), has three stepchildren, and

works as the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion at a Private Doctoral University.

The appointment of Fabiola to this position was announced via the institution's news

page and highlighted her nearly 25 years of experience in higher education. Fabiola can

track her decision to begin a career in higher education way back and stated, "the moment

when I knew I wanted to do diversity, equity, inclusion or accessibility was my first day

of new student orientation at [my undergraduate institution]." Fabiola grew up in the city

where she obtained her undergraduate degree and knew it was a truly diverse town, but

there was no one in the sea of thousands of people who looked like her. She did not see people with dark skin or dark hair, and she turned around to leave, saying to herself, "I can't do this. This is not for me." And it was a moment where she questioned whether she made a mistake coming to this institution. It was the irony of her feeling isolated in a sea of thousands of people. And just when she was about to turn around to leave, in the very, very back corner, she saw a small group of people who had brown skin and black hair. She stated,

> "Are those my people? I think they may be my people." So, I actually, I walked[ed] through and of all coincidences, they were actually other Filipinos, and I was like, "They were my people." I had no idea what was happening. And they had already found the Multicultural Center at some point, maybe during the tour or something, they actually found the Multicultural Center. And so, the next day they brought me to that Multicultural Center and that was my home for the next four years. I lived in that Center. I would arrive there before the housekeepers got there because I was a commuter. I would stay late. I lived in that Center, and I remember thinking, "I don't ever want anyone to feel how I felt that night." And it's only because of that Center that I actually stayed at that university. And there was something about being with other folks of color.

After that experience Fabiola thought to herself,

> How can I get paid to work with young people, and how can I get paid to do the retreats I was doing where we were unpacking privilege and power? I was like,

how can I get paid to do that? And yet no one told me how to do that. Not even

the multicultural center director. She didn't even tell me how to do it.

She stated that she "just happened to stumble upon it" and "so it just so happened the

summer after I graduated that there was a director level position at a very tiny residential

college in Maryland that required a bachelor [degree]." Fabiola proclaimed "for whatever

reason I was able to make it through because they took a chance on me. And I have not

looked back [and I have been in] higher ed since then." While climbing the ladder to a

senior level position Fabiola shared how her promotion was based on performance while

other were based on potential and expressed,

The journey to [my senior level position was] so difficult because in my case in

particular, I always had to prove [my worth] again. When I applied for an

assistant dean position, there were two other dean positions at the same level

being searched for … [My position], of all the 14 of the deans, was the only one

that required a terminal degree. In fact, there was a dean who had a bachelor

[degree]. So, the one person of color [the institution knew was going to apply they

are] going to [be required to have] a doctorate degree. And I didn't have just one

on campus interview. I had two on campus interviews. And in fact, the second on-

campus interview included [an] interview with the president, [it] included me

facilitating a focus group for Black and Latina men. It's just like they got so much

labor out of me. And even in the promotion, I had to be a PI for a project. I had to

do all these extra duties in order to be promoted, [whereas] my other two

colleagues who were hired within six to eight weeks of me were promoted a year

earlier without any extra duties. They were promoted on performance, excuse me,

potential. I was promoted [based] on performance. I had to prove [my worth]

again and again. So, the journey to the executive level had always been one where

I felt like there were just so many hoops.

Though Fabiola expressed, "I actually think I could have been a really good attorney," it was her identity that led her to higher education as she "[felt a] sense of social responsibility, I think because of what happened to me as a college student, because of what happened to me as an immigrant and as an Asian American woman especially."

Gloria

Gloria described herself as "a highly educated woman of color, and consider myself to be middle class." Gloria also described her socioeconomic upbringing and shared,

I grew up poor. And I was very poor in a place where I had no running water or

electricity in the Dominican Republic. So, it was very country-like. And even

though I grew up poor, I don't know that I ever questioned my class because every

one of my needs were met. So, as a child, I don't consider myself to have

experienced food insecurity or to lack anything.

She stated in terms of her racial and ethnic identity "I'm Dominican, as such. My dad, I would say, is a Black Dominican. My mom is a Brown Dominican." Gloria described her religion or belief and stated, "I consider myself a Christian. I grew up Catholic, and I became a Christian, and in college/grad school." After Gloria became a Christian her outlook and attitude towards all aspects of her life have been a product of her strong belief and faith in God. Gloria was previously married and currently she stated "I am

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married to a Puerto Rican, US born, White passing male. I have two boys. I was previously married, so my older boy is 22. I remarried and [I have] a nine-year old with my current husband." She works as the Vice President for Student Affairs at a Private Special Focus 4-year Arts, Music & Design School. The announcement of Gloria's appointment to this position was through the president's office at her institution and the institution's newspaper, as well as through the graduate school at her alma mater. These announcements highlighted her 25+ years of experience across several different institutions working in student affairs and collaborating with people within the institution to create inclusive communities for students. Gloria reflected on her intersecting identities and wondered how big of an impact it would have on the people at different institutional types, and she articulated,

It's interesting, because at different points in my career, I wondered, and explored whether to consider community colleges, Hispanic Serving Institutions [HSIs]. Every so often I went back and forth in terms of like, maybe I could have a bigger impact at a community college. Maybe I could have a bigger impact at an HSI or an institution that is not a PWI. I did wonder [about this] lots and lots [at] different stages in my career. And I remember having a conversation with actually this was a Latino mentor of mine, who said to me, he said, "there is no right or wrong, because in those places they need people like you. But the Ivy Leagues, PWI, also need people like you because we have students that are BIPOC, that need to see that there are BIPOC women of color in positions of leadership in those places."

Gloria's decision to begin a career in higher education was unplanned, she expressed, "To be perfectly honest, I don't think that it was ever planned. Oh, definitely not originally." She proclaimed, "I went to college because a high school teacher told me that I should." Gloria attended a state school in Long Island where she studied political science and shared,

> I thought I wanted to be an attorney, because of course it was still back in those days where you only heard of certain professions, law, medicine, teacher and so forth. So higher ed was never a thing. I thought I was going to go to law school.

While in college she got involved and gained a lot of experience. One day she claimed,

> A vice president for student affairs kind of like asked if I would consider student affairs, and then encouraged me to get my master's in student affairs. I would say after I was done with my master's, I think at that point I knew that I wanted to stay in higher ed and have since pursued careers that have aligned to a higher ed progression and growth.

Gloria felt "like the journey has been its own in terms of God's plan, but grateful that I got to where I am. …The path has shifted throughout, but [I am] grateful to be where I am."

Introduction of Themes

History has shown repeatedly that in higher education colleges and universities have struggled to adequately address the issues of discrimination and marginalization of racial and ethnic groups (Cohen & Kisher, 2010; Eckel & King, 2004; Nidiffer, 2002; Solomon, 1985). The participants of this study were seven RAEMW who held senior

level administrative positions at PWIs in the U.S. They represented diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives on their roles and challenges in higher education. The study focused on investigating the experiences of senior level RAEMW administrators who are employed at a 4-year PWI. Additionally, the study analyzed how the organizational context influences their achievements. The essence of the phenomenon experienced by RAEMW senior level administrators at 4-year PWIs is the visibility of their intersectional identities and how that impacted their experiences navigating higher education. The analysis of the interviews yielded three themes that highlight this essence which include: 1) The Power of Identity, 2) Daily Indignities as Barriers to Advancement, and 3) Communities of Support and Success Strategies that Promotes Boundary Setting.

Theme #1 The Power of Identity

The first theme, *The Power of Identity*, was an important theme that all of the participants discussed repeatedly throughout their lives and higher education experiences. For the participants, their identities are at the core of who they are, what they do, and what they say. Identity has the power to shape one's sense of agency, autonomy, belonging, purpose, and self-worth (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Mosley, 1980). It also examines how identity can be a source of strength, pride, and resilience, as well as a target of oppression, discrimination, and violence. For the participants, their experiences are uniquely racialized and gendered; race and gender are deeply embedded in all of their experiences, and it is difficult to disentangle which source of discrimination they are confronting at a given time. At 4-year PWIs, senior level administrators who identify as RAEMW encounter a phenomenon of the visibility of their intersectional identities. This visibility is at the core of the study's essence; this

visibility significantly influences their lives and shapes their experiences as they navigate higher education as senior level administrators. All the participants shared the power their visible intersectional identities have had on their lives prior to and within the field of higher education. Participants had to understand and navigate the unique intersectional experiences that they encountered as a RAEMW senior level administrator at a 4-year PWI.

The identity of the participants empowered and shaped their aspirations that were influenced by their families, cultures, religions, communities, networks, and mentors who share a connection to their identity and experiences (Cardena, 2016; Davis, 2022; Falk, 2011; Guilory-Lacey, 2020; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Holley, 2021; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Mahatmya et al., 2022; Moore, 2013; Murakami et al., 2018; Rodela et al., 2019; Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2020; Spicer, 2004). The study's essence revolves around visibility, which profoundly impacted the participants' lives and shaped their experiences being a cabinet member. One's identity is shaped by the experiences one seeks, creates, and interprets. The visibility of identity can affect how one experiences, learns from, and responds to the events and situations in one's life, as well as how one affects the experiences of others. Likewise, the visibility of identity can affect how one is perceived, treated, and valued by others, as well as how one perceives, treats, and values oneself. Everything is influenced, shaped, and mediated by their identity. The data supporting the sub-themes in the following sections are presented collectively for each participant.

Identity Highlighting Their Visibility on Cabinet

The participants shared their experiences with other cabinet members and being on the cabinet at their institution of higher education. The visible intersecting identities of the participants had a powerful influence on their experiences serving on the cabinet at their institutions. The participants experienced being "the only" ones at the table. Dorothy noted, "And it's been tough, because [the] seven years that I've been in this role, I've been the only person of color on the president's cabinet." Additionally, Dorothy had to learn how to find a balance being on the cabinet and stated, "It's a bit of a balance between knowing that there's this pressure, being the only person of color and [wondering] whether I'm doing and [saying the right thing]." Brenda's experience on the cabinet was similar to Dorothy's and Brenda shared, "I was the only person of color on cabinet. We've actually had a fairly mixed gender breakdown, but it's not great being the only... That's never my goal." Brenda also shared how her experience on the cabinet is influenced by whether others feel they need her or value the work she does,

> Here [at my current institution], I'm at a place that doesn't have a lot of knowledge and so therefore there's a lot of reliance [on my expertise]. That, in some ways, leads to more successful outcomes for me as a [woman of color] practitioner, because I'm either needed or valued. I guess [it] is the easiest way to sum that up. It would be nice to be both.

Edith's intersectional identity has shaped how serious she is taken by others as a cabinet member, and she stated,

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So sometimes you're taken seriously, sometimes you're not. You're seen for your

race more than you are for your gender or sex because race is very

prominent…So…[my] experience is really based on how others view me and

view my experience and view either the decisions I make or the advice or

opinions I have.

Catherine shared how her identity has impacted the agency and authority in the work she

does in her position and asserted,

That identity piece, who am I in this role and how do I show up and how do I

embrace my background, and express pride over that, and support others in

that?...I operate with different authority. I'm in a position ... I'm [on the]

president's cabinet. I have the ability to say and do things and influence things that

I did not have before.

Gloria reflected on the importance of her identity being visible at the cabinet table and

not taking that for granted and expressed,

Yeah, I think sometimes we look at life like the cup is halfway empty or the cup is

halfway full. I tend to be, a cup is halfway full. So even when I feel like I am the

only person in the seat, I'm just like, people could see that there is someone on the

seat. So, coming from a place that lacked representation in most places that I've

ever been, I just don't take it for granted. I'm like, okay, so it may be me, but at

least there's somebody versus there's nobody.

Fabiola experienced loneliness and isolation being on the cabinet and shared,

And the thing that's so difficult too is when you're at the cabinet level, when they

say it's lonely at the top, it is so lonely because first of all, the kinds of concerns

that you are discussing at the cabinet level, you can't really discuss with anyone

else except the cabinet, because they're executive level decisions that require

privilege and privileged information. And then to be in spaces where we have to

constantly justify our existence [as a woman of color] in that space, there are very

few people who can relate to that.

Being a minority in a leadership position can offer many opportunities and rewards, such

as being a role model, a change agent, and a voice for the marginalized. Fabiola shared

how her identity has shaped the job she does, and she asserted,

So, a lot of times when I introduce myself to new audiences, I talk about my

experience as an immigrant and navigating a bicultural experience…And I talk

about being a woman of color who navigated a predominantly White institution.

And I don't think I would be doing this job if I didn't have those identities.

This shows how the power of identity can affect one's leadership style, effectiveness, and

impact. The power of identity also highlights how the identities of the participants have

shaped their experience with various colleagues in higher education.

Identity Impacting Power Dynamics

The visibility of identity plays a crucial role in shaping how individuals

are perceived, treated, and valued by others and significantly influences how individuals

perceive, treat, and value themselves. The intersecting identities of the participants

shaped the experiences and the power dynamics they had with other colleagues and with

students. The participants also shared their experiences with colleagues and its impact on the power dynamics within the institution. The visible intersecting identities of the participants also had a powerful influence on their experiences with various colleagues that include White men, White women, gay men, and other minoritized people. Gloria's identity has shaped her experiences across all the constituents at her institution and she expressed,

> I bring every aspect of my identity to every day of my work, and the way that I think, and act, and behave, and do everything is who I am, is what I do. I talk very openly about my upbringing in terms of growing up poor… But also recognizing that I do have power, and privilege, and how I use that to support folks matter[s]."

As a cabinet member Gloria actively sought out support from her colleagues. She divulged that,

> …I do also work very, very hard at developing the relationships with my colleagues…I'm constantly thinking about just the relationship because [as a woman of color] I feel like I need to make sure that they know me, they know my work, they know what I'm doing, because I can't be really successful without their support. So that's served me well, to invest in developing those relationships.

Brenda shared her overall experiences with her colleagues and feeling used,

> I think I [grew] very tired of being tapped constantly to answer questions that [my colleagues] should be able to answer for themselves. When I think about [it] just because [this] is my expertise and I am a person of color, I think those things go hand in hand. [My colleagues] link my identity with my expertise, although that is

not always the case. Not all people of color are experts in diversity and inclusion

work. I try really hard to be able to build people's capacity so that they can answer

these questions for themselves. When they resist that, I try really hard to remind

them that I'm not going to do their work for them. I let them struggle to answer

the questions.

Brenda also shared her experiences with the lack of care specifically from White male

senior leaders on the cabinet and stated,

I think the message that I got was, [senior leaders do not] care enough to learn

people's names. In addition, they are so used to having at these tables, one or none

of women of color, people of color, frankly, broadly, that they don't even have the

capacity to understand that this table is going to look different. I guess the

message I got [from senior leaders] was just raggedy behavior. It helps me to also

recognize that they are used to tokenizing and having just one. It is always my

goal to make sure that I'm never just one at [the] table. They're going to have to

just adjust.

Participants also emphasized their experiences not only with White men but also with

White women. Angie shared multiple instances, explaining, "I have… White women, you

know, who are constantly trying to, I would say sabotage [me]." Sharing one experience

she said,

As I say, they tried me. I remember one time this [White] woman, you know,

called me, and you know she was yelling and screaming and carrying on. I'm

sorry. I said to her, "we really can't communicate or come to a solution with you

yelling at me. So, I'm going to need you to calm down" and she kept on. I said, "I'm going to tell you this one more time." And she kept on. And I said, "look okay," but after the third time I said to her, "when you calm down, and you can speak to me in a manner in which we can understand each other, please call me back" and I hung up. And she did call back. And she called [back in] a calm voice. And I [worked] with her for many years after that, but there was always tension. You know it. It was almost like "how dare this Black woman."

Simultaneously, Angie has had positive experiences with other White women who have made an impact on her career advancements and professed,

And this White woman tapped me and got me on [a national board of professionals] …, and it's a pretty prestigious job in the field, and it has opened up so many doors, but I'm the only Black [woman]. There is an Indian woman who, we've connected [with one another], and you know we support each other.

Lastly, Angie also shared her experience with a White Male colleague who had a problem with her timeliness in regard to her electronic communication and he stated "Listen, if we're gonna work together I'm gonna need you to respond to my emails [because] I don't work that way." He tried to bring his issue with her to the attention of the president, however, that tactic was not effective, and she expressed, "I came in. I saw the email, and I was just like 'who does he think he's talking to?' … the President never responded, [but] just because I'm Black doesn't mean that you can disrespect me."

In addition, Catherine shared her experience of frustration with an entitled White male colleague who thinks he can do a better job of being a senior level administrator and stated,

> We have [White men] working around you, swimming in your lane, if you will, your areas of responsibility, and they're going to bring everything to a certain point to then bring it to you, to do all this work, for you to be helpful, and part of that is their own culture of believing that everything is within their purview because they are and they deserve and they exist. These things manifest themselves in very subtle ways but cause extraordinary frustration.

Catherine also shared her experience with a White male colleague and the exclusion she felt as a cabinet member,

> So, part of what I did at [my institution] a few years ago, I had a colleague that I worked very closely with, and we were working on an initiative together, and unbeknownst to me, he had taken the initiative and assigned it to his staff... [the initiative] was almost completed, and I had no idea what was going on. Part of the reason we were working on the initiative together, [was] to provide greater opportunity to diverse candidates. So, I looked at the program, the old program they had, and I said, just structurally, this program does not provide opportunities to people of color, and it doesn't provide opportunities for women, especially single moms, those types of individuals.

And, of course, her colleague repeated that lack of opportunity by excluding her on other projects and initiatives. Finally, Catherine shared her experiences as a cabinet member with the unconscious bias of White men and claimed,

> So that's very much what is, and understanding that the unconscious bias, people that don't even realize that their biases are showing, and I've been there long enough where it's not as much of a struggle now because of my reputation and my standing, but it comes across ... People, White males in particular, believing they know more, they know better, they're trying to be helpful, they're going to guide you and really engage in behaviors that are, from where I sit, they're disrespectful.

Concurrently, individuals at the institution see the potential in the participants and support them by providing opportunities they have not thought about. Dorothy shared her surprise when a White male colleague revealed how he "kind of put the bug in the President's ear" to help her get the cabinet position due to her vocal presence on the committees she served on.

Identity Empowering Students

The participants shared their experiences with students at their institution**.** The visible intersecting identities of the participants also had a powerful influence on their experiences with students and allowed them to advocate for students in unique ways. This advocacy is how they empower students in their role as senior level administrators. A student expressed to Dorothy, "You know… just seeing a person of color at [the cabinet] level the impact that it had [on me]." Fabiola shared how her intersectional identity

shaped her experiences with helping students advocate and understand policy during protesting,

> When students were demonstrating protesting, [me and my assistant director] already had that set trust with the students so we could talk to them and say, "we're not dissuading you from protest, but what is the purpose of your protest? What are y'all thinking about?" And we would have honest conversations and I would say, "look, here's the policy. If you all decide to follow the policy, great. If you don't, just know that there are going to be repercussions." And I would see there were three instances where students actually changed their strategy in the moment [as a result of my guidance and advice], and they didn't violate policy. There's something brilliant about the ways in which students were able to organize and mobilize. And that year was so incredible for me because I realized I was in a different position [as a senior level administrator] where student advocacy was so critical in a moment where students of color and student activists were under attack and people were weaponizing their activism, and really vilifying students [of color] who in many ways felt that the system had failed them because it had. It had failed them; it had failed their ancestors before them.

With similar sentiments Catherine expressed how her intersectional identities has shaped her experiences within her institution about student advocacy,

> And we are at a predominantly White institution, …constantly trying to advocate for more money for food insecurity…and thinking about how [does the institution] advocate for students is something that I feel like I talk [about] from

my direct experiences…It comes with every aspect of my many, many, many

identities. And which, again, I don't shy away from one bit of anything. I feel like

I'm pretty open about my experiences, my story, and my journey with [my

identity]. And not just even in terms of my work, even in terms of my advocacy.

Likewise, Brenda explained how her intersectional identity impacted her encounter with a

student at the bookstore,

My first week on campus, I went to the bookstore because I wanted to buy [some

institution paraphernalia], but [as I was checking out] the cashier who was a

student worker was like, "Oh, oh, are you new here?" I was like, "Yeah, I just got

my ID." She was like, "Oh, where do you work?" I was like, "Oh, I work at the

intercultural center, the new one." She was like, "Oh, that's so cool. Are you the

secretary?" I was like, "No, I'm the director." She responds, "Oh, good for you." I

was like, "Girl, this is every..." I'm going to use this exchange in a training one

day. It's just like, that's the kind of stuff that students go through here, too. Just a

lot of presumed incompetence and just not used to seeing people who look like

me in these types of positions at this campus.

Despite this encounter, Brenda shared how her experiences with students has kept her in

her role and claimed,

But what keeps me in the role is the students and meeting them and seeing them

grow and being able to be their advocate and to lift their voices. That's always

what has sustained me…sometimes you want to just cuss people out, but… it's

going to…be really bad for your students…That's how I navigate. I think that's

what's helped to sustain me, because really... I could have been fired by now for

some of the things I really [wanted] to say in those moments.

Theme #2 Daily Indignities as Barriers to Advancement

The second theme, *Daily Indignities as Barriers to Advancement*, was another

theme that was prevalent throughout the higher education journey of the participants. The

identity of the participants such as their race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality and the

intersection of these identities has impacted the barriers they encountered as senior level

administrators in higher education and how they responded to them. The identity of the

participants also helped them to overcome the barriers they experience being a RAEMW

senior level administrator in a predominantly White profession in order to advance in

their career and be successful. The participants who experienced discrimination, bias, or

invisibility based on their identity may also face barriers such as impostor syndrome, self-

doubt, isolation, or hostility. These indignities are the sources for managing expectations

to help the participants navigate through higher education as a senior level administrator.

The data supporting this theme in the following section are presented collectively for

each participant.

The intersectional identities of the participants play a critical role in the types of

barriers that they encounter while navigating the field of higher education. These barriers

are unique and are only experienced by those whose lives are at the marginalized

intersection of their race and gender. These barriers can impact the participants by

shaping their resilience, adaptability, and growth mindset. The essence is present in how

the participants' lives as senior level administrators are impacted by these barriers due to

the visibility of their intersectional identities and ultimately their experiences navigating

higher education. Brenda asserted feelings about the indignities that occur within institutions of higher education and stated that, "I mean, I think there's daily indignities that are barriers, right?" The barriers that the participants experienced include well-intentioned White counterparts, various levels of microaggressions and macroaggressions, discomfort, being used, a lack of care and support, financial hardship, impostor syndrome, self-doubt, isolation, hostility, and the level of committee involvement.

White male colleagues are a barrier to the success of the participants. Angie shared her experiences with White men and stated, "So it has been a challenge in the very early stages of working there, not with White women, [but] with White men." Catherine explained her experience with a White male colleague who had good intentions but was counterproductive and stated, "… I had a colleague who was forever helpful, but forever getting into my lane." Catherine said, "Women that may appear to be supportive that are not, so there's still this undercurrent." Catherine also shared her experiences with another senior level woman administrator's lack of care and support towards a fellow senior level woman administrator and stated,

> So, it's subtle, [a] senior woman administrator telling me, "I just invited you to this meeting because my boss made me invite you, but I don't really want you here." So, there were a lot of things like that.

Another barrier that the participants encountered was related to enacting change within their institution of higher education. When it comes to being successful at making changes, the identities of the participants played a major impact on overcoming this

barrier. These indignities sometimes are presented in the form of microaggressions that the participants encounter within the institution. Brenda also shared her experiences with White men using microaggressions and expressed,

> But I mean, there's a lot of microaggressions, there's a lot of dismissing. There is not a lot of respect for some of the critical questions…I have to do a lot of explaining [to White men] about why I'm asking this particular question or getting folks to understand... Frankly, I have to do that the most with my [White male] senior leader[s].

Gloria shared her experiences with political microaggressions and stated,

> So, I would say the barriers at every step of the way [are] microaggressions, the politics, being used [by White colleagues] in a way. So sometimes you are just what [the institution] need[s] for certain things…I call it… being used.

Sometimes the barriers that the participants experienced were a result of their own doing. Dorothy expressed how she created a barrier for herself because of her discomfort in asking for the resources she needed and stated, "And sometimes I put that barrier on myself where I probably should have asked anyway, right? And [I] just didn't, because I felt uncomfortable doing that because of [how much financial resources it would cost]." Although the participants may experience countless forms of barriers each day, they do not let these barriers stand in their way. They cannot afford to and thus these barriers are catalysts that empower the participants to uncover how they can use these obstacles as steppingstones to create and promote strategies that will ensure their success.

Theme #3 Communities of Support and Success Strategies that Promotes Boundary Setting

The third theme, *Communities of Support and Success Strategies that Promotes Boundary Setting,* was another theme that was prevalent throughout the participants' lives and higher education experiences. Support is provided in various forms to help the participants face the pressure they experience as RAEMW senior level administrators. This theme investigates how participants' intersectional identities are influenced by the sources of support they receive and have access to are based on the communities they belong to, such as friends, culture, religion, nation, etc. The visibility of identity can also affect how one relates to, interacts with, and influences others, as well as how one is related to, interacted with, and influenced by others. The core essence of the phenomenon experienced by the participants lies in the recognition of their intersecting identities and how these factors influenced their experiences on cabinet at their institution. This theme highlights how support is essential to the work the participants do. The data supporting the sub-themes in the following sections are presented collectively for each participant.

Sources of Support that Keeps Them on the Cabinet

The intersectional identities of the participants are a critical component to how they engage with and develop support within the various communities they are affiliated with. Communities provide participants with emotional, social, and practical resources that can help them cope with challenges, achieve their goals, and thrive (Carroll, 1980; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Isablea, 2018; Jacobs, 1996; Meeuwisse et al., 2010; Moore, 1987; Mosley, 1980). A supportive community can also boost the self-esteem, confidence, and well-being of its members. Communities influence the support

participants received in their cabinet positions, which was evident within the study. The participants also describe a variety of other sources of support that they received while being a RAEMW senior level administrator at their institution.

The participants shared how their family was a source of support for them as a senior level administrator. Having family support is one way in which some participants were able to use it as a source of support to push through the difficulties they encounter. Angie described how her family are the support that helps keep her in her role as a cabinet member and stated,

> I have a twin sister. I have a 91-year-old phenomenal mom, my kids, and I got some really strong women, you know friends, you know who I consider sisters who have my back, you know and have helped me push through.

Fabiola also shared how her husband is her source of support that keep her in her role as a cabinet member and she proclaimed,

> I would also say my husband is an incredible source of support. In many ways my husband's my life coach too, and I think it matters that he is also a person of color because he experiences life as a Black man in this country in a different way than other folks. And we face things together and we're a team, and it feels good to be able to come home when I feel I've been just beaten up and just dragged to come home and be loved and supported really, means so much to me. … And to have that with my husband is an incredible source of love and support that I'm appreciative of.

While Catherine shared how her mom was a source that cultivated her drive and commitment to being at the top of her game. It is this family support of her work ethics and commitment that paved the way for Catherine to obtain a cabinet level position and what still sustains her in the work she does, and she explained,

> So, I have to attribute to my mom, her work ethic and commitments and demands on her children. … So, I said I attribute this to my mom who always demanded more of us. So when I went into one area [of the institution], this is the job you have to do, and I'd always go back and say, "Well, I know you asked me to do this, but I noticed that this, this, this, these other things are an issue too, and maybe if we address all of these, we'll be in a better place."

Other participants discovered their source of support through their various communities. Communities of support was another source of support that helped keep the participants in their role as a RAEMW senior level administrator. The communities vary for each participant and include mentors, other senior level administrators both within and outside the field of higher education, identity-based communities or individuals, and institutional environments. Edith also described her experiences as a senior level administrator with support and growth from mentors who may or may not differ from her racial and gender identity and shared, "…two individuals who have been supportive of me and my growth and respect my opinion, even though we may differ race and gender wise. One, …an African American woman and the other is a White male." Fabiola expressed the importance of community building within the institution to obtain support and asserted,

Community building with other Filipinos, community building with other women of color, community building with folks in our field. So as part of my practice [as a senior level administrator], I try to build regular gatherings…while it might be lonely or isolating in our respective departments, at least across campus, there are folks who love us and care for us and want us to be successful in our leadership.

Additionally, the chancellor and the chair of the board of trustees provided Fabiola support, and she proclaimed,

I have a chancellor who has been deeply supportive and who has been visible and vocal around advocating for diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility…Our board chair is a person of color, and the previous board chair was a White woman, but she worked diligently to diversify that board. It matters to me that my direct supervisor and who he's accountable to as well cares deeply about these issues because otherwise it's just window dressing.

Besides, Fabiola also has a group of women of color outside of the institution that she tapped into for support, and she disclosed that,

A few women of color who are at the same level at my institution, but also there are women of color in other cabinet positions in the region, and we get together on a regular basis. And regular is really more semi-annually once a semester. And there's something powerful about the ability to talk freely with folks without having to self-censor, without having to do the backstory, without having to give context or justify why we're upset or why we're angry or why we're frustrated. So that has been an incredible source of support.

When the president at Dorothy's institution wanted her to continue to work two different jobs, it was the faculty and staff that provided her support and she shared,

> So, the support in that aspect was really from the faculty and staff and in pushing the President… [and] the senior team to say "this makes absolutely no sense. This is two full time jobs," as much as I tried to say [it] too, [it] didn't get through.

Faculty and staff within the Minority Association were also good supporters for Dorothy and she expressed that,

> … there [is] a core group of faculty and staff, particularly through the Minority Faculty and Staff Association. So, they're a good support.

The support for Dorothy did not stop there she even received support from the cabinet and conveyed,

> … so I would say I started to get really support from the [faculty and staff] community and then from the cabinet in terms of okay, what are the resources that you need to do this job effectively… [so] I can actually really focus strategically on diversity on a campus level.

A supportive institutional environment is explained by Angie as one that also relates to the visible intersecting identities that an individual possesses. Angie expressed how the institutional environment impacted her success as a senior level on the cabinet, "I do think that when you're working around people that look like you, I think it's a more supportive [institutional] environment." Brenda described her sources of support as

individuals who can see the value of the work that she is bring to the institution and stated,

> I think my strongest allies are folks that have the capacity to see that what I'm bringing to the table will benefit them. I think that there are folks who genuinely care about diversity and inclusion work, some other senior leaders who genuinely care in their personal lives, but maybe haven't necessarily thought about it in their work lives.

Student affairs professionals are Brenda's source of community support from, and she expressed,

> You have to find your people… I have one other colleague now who's the senior academic officer who is also a woman of color. We've worked together really closely and try to support each other.

Lastly, the support from Gloria's White woman president showed her that her voice and presence mattered as a senior level administrator and she professed,

> I'm in a very unique position and for the first time in my entire career, I feel like I am at an institution where my voice matters, my perspective matters[s]. I am supported with the finances; I'm supported with the resources. I'm supported in terms of my own professional development and growth. So, I do feel like even though it's a predominantly White institution and I'm working for a White woman president, I feel like she's definitely invested in my success as a person and the success of my unit. But she's just as invested in bringing my perspective to the table. So that's been really, really great.

In addition to the support she received from her White woman president, Gloria also shared having support from various groups,

> I'm very blessed to have different buckets of people that I know genuinely care about me and my success [as a senior level administrator] … I also have a good support system of women of color, that I feel like have been really good champions, and mentors, and sponsors in that sense. And most recently, [a] White woman."

Having multiple sources of support as a result of their visible identities also inspired, motivated, and mobilized the participants to pursue their passions, purpose, and possibilities within the field of higher education as senior level administrators.

Success Strategies that Promotes Boundary Setting

The success strategies the participants shared are all about getting support in order to be successful as a RAEMW senior level administrator. Success strategies emphasize the approaches, techniques, or methods specifically designed to achieve success (Grant, 2013; Smith, 2023). It implies that these strategies are directly linked to the desired outcome of success (Garcia & Lee, 2022; Smith, 2023). The success strategies are viewed as a collection of intentional actions aimed at propelling an individual toward their goals (Cardena, 2016; Chen & Wang, 2021; Smith, 2023). The barriers the participants experienced were used as catalysts to create success strategies that fostered, sustained, and advanced the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion of RAEMW senior level administrators to show them that their identity matters to the institution (Chen & Wang, 2021; Grant, 2013; Shea et al., 2022; Smith, 2023). The participants shared the success

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strategies they used to navigate higher education as the only one or one of few senior level administrators on the cabinet at their institution. The success strategies that they used to help themselves triumph over the various barriers that RAEMW endure while living in the margins of their intersectional identity in the field of higher education include self-encouragement, working twice as hard, perfectionism, containing emotions, and learning to say no and not feel guilty about it. These success strategies are collectively used as a source for the participants to set boundaries for themselves to ensure that they are able to do their job as a senior level administrator. When the participants felt pushback from their managers about the changes they are trying to enact, they encouraged and supported themselves. Dorothy echoed this attitude and shared how she balances expectations for herself by speaking up for herself, she explained,

> I'm the support, feeling comfortable enough to speak up to the President to the senior team about some of the pushback and the barriers I am getting and being able to get support from them [for] having a policy so that when I do get pushback, I can say to the manager, well, this is a policy. So, you got to do it.

Dorothy demonstrates a leader's ability to set boundaries by advocating for a clear policy. She feels comfortable speaking up to senior management, emphasizing that she can rely on established policies when facing pushbacks. Likewise, Dorothy shared how she used being a perfectionist as a success strategy in her role as a senior level administrator and expressed, "… [I ensured] that I cross[ed] my T's and dotted my I's, and [to] not make any mistakes." Dorothy's focus on crossing all her T's and dotting all her I's underscores her commitment to precision. Leaders who pay attention to details set boundaries by ensuring quality and accuracy in their work.

With all the barriers that the participants had to endure as RAEMW senior level administrators, Brenda's success strategy is to work longer and harder and shared that "I step away from work when the day is done, and sometimes that day is done at 5:00PM. Sometimes it's done at 1:00AM. You do what you got to do." Brenda's statement about working hard and stepping away from work when needed reflects a boundary she sets for herself and she stated, "...so, I've gotten a little bit better at saying no and not feeling guilty about it." Furthermore, the participants are taxed with a high demand of committee involvement which goes beyond the scope of their role and responsibility. Dorothy shared that,

> "There are a lot of committees outside of my own job. And I think being the one
> of very few directors of color, women of color and director level positions. I was
> invited to be on a lot of committees outside of my responsibility."

Brenda is no stranger to being involved on several committees but has developed a success strategy of learning when to say no to additional invitations to joining committees. Brenda's growth in confidently saying "No" without guilt signifies a boundary-setting skill. Leaders must learn to prioritize and decline requests when necessary, maintaining focus on strategic goals. Lastly, Catherine shared how as a senior level administrator she has to contain her emotions in order to be successful and enact change within her institution and explained,

> So now I have to set all of my [emotions] aside if I really want to bring about
> change, but it's just more work. The [White man] could just buy in and be like,

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"Yes, I'm behind all of this," but you've had to rearrange. So, one of the lessons is

[that] everything is harder, everything is harder, but things are changing.

Catherine's experience of setting emotions aside to drive change highlights a boundary

that leaders often face. She acknowledges the extra effort required to navigate emotions

while pursuing transformation. While containing her emotion is a success strategy, it also

does not help Catherine get her point across that this White man is taking credit for

something she worked so hard on.

Summary

In summary, this study implemented Husserl's (1999, 2012) transcendental

phenomenological approach to emphasize the participants' experiences and minimize the

researcher's interpretations, thereby presenting the essence of the phenomenon. The data

collection process involved conducting one-on-one audio and video recorded interviews,

maintaining a research journal, creating research memos, and gathering public

information such as Curriculum Vitae (CV), LinkedIn profiles, and College and

University webpages which served as sources for triangulation (Armstrong et al., 1997;

Denzin, 2007, 2012; Patton, 1999, 2002). Moustakas' (1994) modified Stevick-Colaizzi-

Keen phenomenological approach was used to analyze the data from the interviews to

develop the meaning and essence of the phenomenon. The essence of the experience

encountered by RAEMW senior level administrators at 4-year PWIs revolves around the

recognition and influence of their visible interconnected identities. These identities

significantly shape their personal lives and journeys within higher education. From this

essence three themes emerged: 1) The Power of Identity, 2) Daily Indignities as Barriers

to Advancement, and 3) Communities of Support and Success Strategies that Promotes

Boundary Setting. The analysis of the themes described in this chapter is presented in

Chapter 5 along with further discussion.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Summary of the Study

This study investigated the experiences of senior level RAEMW administrators employed at 4-year PWIs in the U.S. and examined the influence of institutional contexts on their advancements. This study was guided by the following research questions: 1) How do Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women senior level administrators describe their experiences navigating higher education, 2) How do senior level Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women administrators describe the impact of institutional environments on their career advancement in higher education, and 3) How can intersectionality, counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, and interest convergence inform research on Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women's experiences as senior level administrators? In order to capture the essence of what it is to be a RAEMW specifically, Asian, Black/African American, and Latinx, this study used a phenomenological method (Creswell, 1998, 2007, 2013; Koopman, 2015; Moran, 2002; Sokolowski, 2000; Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007; van Manen, 2007, 2014, 2016), more specifically a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach that involved interviews with senior level administrators at 4-year PWIs in the U.S. (Husserl, 1998, 2012; Husserl & Heidegger, 2014; Moustakas, 1994). The essence that the participants described is the visibility of their intersectional identities and how that shaped the experiences of the participants as they navigated higher education as senior level administrators (Creswell, 1998, 2007, 2013). The literature review provides historical context of U.S. higher education which describes the conceptualization of race and gender and the history of women's access and

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experiences in higher education, which includes institutional environments, barriers to advancement, and the specific experiences of Asian, Black/African American, and Latinx women in higher education. The theoretical framework highlights four of the six tenets of CRT in conjunction with Crenshaw's (1989; 1994, 2015) Intersectionality Framework to provide the conceptual framework that grounded this study. The previous chapter highlighted the findings of this study. It provided an overview of the data collection and data analysis process, profiles of the participants, and introduction of the themes. Three main themes emerged from the study that included: 1) The Power of Identity, 2) Daily Indignities as Barriers to Advancement, and 3) Communities of Support and Success Strategies that Promotes Boundary Setting. The next section will examine how these themes relate to the existing literature of this study.

Discussion

This study's findings corroborate and expand on the previous research that was presented in the literature review in chapter two. First, the findings showed the power of identity and how intersectional identities are at the core of who the participants are, how they behave, and what they value as senior level administrators at a 4-year PWI. The background of participants is what helped shape their identity and educational experiences that enabled them to achieve senior level status as administrators in higher education. The participants shared about how their upbringing was a foundational source from which their identity stems and how they still reference that when interacting with people in higher education as senior level administrators. They expressed how they valued their education and asserted pride in their identities and how those visible intersectional identities have played a role in their pursuit of higher education, yet they

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have historically been excluded (Eckel & King, 2004; Greenstein, 2017). This exclusion has been reflected in the experiences of the participants even though they hold very high-level positions as administrators within their institutions. This finding is present in the literature that details the exclusion of members of minoritized racial and ethnic groups from becoming senior level administrators (Austin, 1984; Logue & Anderson, 2001; Milliken, 1990; Seltzer, 2017). The participants shared how difficult it was being the only woman of color or one of few on the cabinet, how lonely and isolating it is, the lack of respect from other White male cabinet members, from male and female colleagues, and the pressure it created. Being the only one or one of few women of color on the cabinet and the lack of respect they receive is not a surprising finding as the historical foundation of higher education in the U.S. has been one that is male-centric and male-dominated until 1841 when Black women began to be allowed access, however, the treatment they receive remains unjust (Carroll, 1980; Cohen & Kisher, 2010; Key Events in Black Higher Education, n.d.; Llyod-Jones, 2009; Mosley, 1980; Nidiffer, 2002; Oberlin History, n.d.; Solomon, 1985). The participants experienced being devalued and being treated with a lack of care by their White colleagues and even by other women of color. They were tokenized; participants felt isolated being the only RAEMW, or one of few, in senior level positions at their institutions and having no colleagues to process and decompress with.

Though the literature points to the fact that race and gender identities are social constructions, they have a major influence on how individuals' experiences in higher education are shaped (England et al., 2020; Frable et al., 1990; Gonzáles-Figueroa & Young, 2005; Haslanger, 2017; Lopez, 1995; Lorber, 1994; Perry et al., 2013; Sánchez et

al., 2020; Settles et al., 2008; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Unger & Crawford, 1992; Wade, 2015). Due to the intersectional identities that the participants possess as senior level administrators, they often encounter unique experiences that their White counterparts or their male counterparts do not have to endure that is rooted in historical discrimination which produces inequities (Abney & Richey, 1991; Alexander & Scott, 1983; Gill & Showell, 1991; Hazari et al., 2013; Johnson, 1991; Lopez, 1995; Mosley, 1980; Settles et al., 2008; Smedley & Smedley, 2005). The participants attested to dealing with issues of racism and sexism as senior level administrators and having to live with the fact that they do not have the privilege to know whether they are being discriminated against based on their race or gender, as these identities cannot be separated. These racist and sexist experiences are reflected in the literature that highlights how RAEMW are underutilized, isolated, and demoralized (Abeny & Richey, 1992; Carroll, 1980; Cazares, 2020; Chung, 2008; Mella, 2012; Montez, 1998; Roy, 2019; Uzogara, 2019). The participants were similarly often underutilized or overutilized for their experiences and expertise within the entire institution (Carroll, 1980).

Additionally, the identity of the participants also shaped their experiences on the cabinet and with colleagues and students within the field of higher education. The participants highlighted how they have both positive and negative experiences with colleagues, especially White colleagues who made them feel supported, used, excluded, sabotaged, and disrespected. However, their experiences with students while being senior level administrators have all been positive. The participants shared how important the students are to keeping them in their roles, how critical the impact of their presence on the cabinet has been to students, and how essential their identity has been in supporting

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student advocacy which all tie back to the literature on how essential diverse administrators are to help racial and ethnic minoritized students feel a sense of belonging (Carroll, 1980; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Jacobs, 1996; Meeuwisse et al., 2010; Moore, 1987; Mosley, 1980). They understand the power and privilege that their identity holds in higher education and how what they do with that power and privilege to help support other minoritized people matters. Every day the participants bring their identity to work in the way that they think, act, and behave and they are not afraid to openly share who they are, where they have been, and how they got to be a senior level administrator with anyone both within and outside their institution. The literature proclaimed that Black women struggle with double-consciousness, a feeling of conflicting identity, viewing themselves through the eyes of others (Bruce, 1992; Buckingham, 2019; Dickens, 2014; Du Bois, 2008). The participants experienced this double-consciousness by feeling one way about themselves while also being aware of how their racial and gender identities shape how other people see them. As higher education professionals the participants feel prepared for the work that they do, however, they are aware that because of their racial and gender identities other people will not see them as such. Even though the findings revealed that the participants see and experience double-consciousness, these RAEMW countered this double-consciousness by making the decision to embrace and be empowered by their racial and gender identities which is scarce in the literature (Bruce, 1992; Buckingham, 2019; Cardena, 2016; Chung, 2009; Dickens, 2014; Du Bois, 2008; Isabela, 2018). The participants also expressed a deep sense of pride in their racial and ethnic identity above all other identities. This deeply rooted sense of pride is what allows the participants to have an easier time navigating the unique experiences they encounter

when their racial and gender identities are being viewed from an intersectional

perspective by their White counterparts which has an impact on their advancements as

senior level administrators (Bruce, 1992; Buckingham, 2019; Dickens, 2014; Du Bois,

2008).

Secondly, the findings showed that RAEMW experienced barriers to their career

advancement as senior level administrators. Jackson and O'Callaghan (2009) claimed

that these barriers to career advancement are related to social, institutional, and internal

factors. The participants experienced social pressures such as racism and sexism that are

rooted within institutions of higher education and are a constant occurrence within the

workplace (Chung, 2009; Garcia, 2020; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009). Calvo (2018)

highlighted how women had to disguise themselves as men to gain access to higher

education, yet participants shared that they cannot disguise themselves because they

cannot change the color of their skin. Furthermore, racism and sexism were experienced

by the participants across the three racial and ethnic groups and created toxic work

environments for them which were often as a result of their interactions with White

colleagues (Alexander & Scott, 1983; Chung, 2008; Gill & Showell, 1991; Johnson,

1991; Moses, 1989; Mosley, 1980; Muñoz et al., 2018; Roy, 2019; Vue et al., 2017).

White men use macro and microaggressions that create unsuitable work environments

(Alexander & Scott, 1983; Gill & Showell, 1991; Johnson, 1991; Moses, 1989; Mosley,

1980). Women were also the source of the barriers that they experienced. These women

contributed to the lack of care and support the participants had at their institutions

(Rudick et al., 2017; Smith, 2015; Wolfe & Freeman, 2013). Dorothy described herself as

the source of her own barrier which is also evident in the research literature (Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Mella, 2012; Montez, 1998; Nakanishi, 1993).

The participants experienced internal barriers, they struggled with imposter syndrome (Brems et al., 1994; Clance & Imes, 1978; Edwards, 2019), they put pressure on themselves to be perfect in every way, and they struggled to find the right family-career balance as they tried to advance their careers in higher education (Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Mosley, 1980). These sentiments were expressed in various forms across the three racial and ethnic groups although each participant took a different approach to how they managed these experiences. The lack of policies, practices, finances, and spaces that could better support the participants in the work environment and with their career advancement in addition to discrimination are a few examples of the institutional barriers (Cardena, 2016; Elenes, 2020; Garcia, 2020; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Montez, 1998; Nieves-Squires, 1991). Though these women experienced all these barriers they refused to allow that to hinder their development and advancement (Davis, 2022).

Lastly, the findings showed the communities of support that keep the participants on the cabinet and the success strategies they used to sustain them on the cabinet at 4-year PWIs. However, there is little literature on the impact that communities have on RAEMW senior level administrators. This finding is interesting since RAEMW are already associated with two communities: the first community is related to their gender identity and the second community is related to their racial and ethnic identity. When these two community identities are viewed together, the lives of RAEMW become complex. The complexity stems from the conscious and subconscious social

constructions pertaining to race/ethnicity and gender that women have to look, act, walk, and talk in certain ways to be considered acceptable (Haslanger, 2017; Lopez, 1995; Lorber, 1994; Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Unger & Crawford, 1992; Wade, 2015). Often these social constructions conflict with one another or take on a deficit perspective when examined from an intersectional perspective. These social constructions both consciously and subconsciously have positive or negative influences on the lives of the participants.

The participants revealed how their various communities were sources of support as they navigated through higher education as senior level administrators. For some participants family was the foundational source of support that they received that continues to shape their identity and success presently as senior level administrators (Falk, 2011; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Mahatmya et al., 2022; Murakami et al., 2018; Rodela et al., 2019; Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2020). Some of the participants expressed that their family served as a current source of reminder not to let stress of the workplace impact their social, emotional, and physical well-being. The need and significance of support from the communities the participants are affiliated with was also clear in the data. The participants echoed the importance of finding a community of similar people to use as a source of support to vent and decompress with. Though the literature mentions a lack of support, opportunities, and mentors, which was echoed in the findings, there was also conflicting data that highlighted the participants asking for asked for and obtaining support, opportunities, and mentors sometimes through the institution (Estrada, 2020; Falk, 2011; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Mahatmya et al., 2022; Murakami et al., 2018; Rodela et al., 2019; Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2020). Participants either created their own communities of support at their institutions or sought

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it outside of the institutions. Even though the participants experienced barriers, they did not let these barriers stop them from advancing their careers and they created ways to ensure that they would be successful as they continued to navigate higher education as senior level administrators (Cardena, 2016; Chen & Wang, 2021; Davis, 2022; Grant, 2013; Shea et al., 2022; Smith, 2023). The participants understood the importance of having support and were intentional about creating that support themselves (Cardena, 2016). The success strategies that the participants used to sustain themselves on cabinet was also highlighted. The participants revealed that they had to encourage themselves, work twice as hard, ensure that their work is perfect, contain their emotions, and learn to say no and not feel guilty about it (Austin, 1984; Crayon, 2019; Falk, 2011; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hernandez & Murakami, 2016; Lee, 2002; Mahatmya et al., 2022; Murakami et al., 2018; Quaye et al., 2015; Rodela et al., 2019; Rodela & Rodriguez-Mojica, 2020; Rudick et al., 2017; Smith, 2015). They understood that because of their unique identities of being RAEMW in such exclusive cabinet level positions, they would need the support of others, especially their White counterparts to be successful even though they were extremely capable. In these incidences some of the participants are either setting boundaries or are self-sacrificing and either way there is a cost related to their success as a result of these strategies (Chance, 2022; Hill et al., 2016; Liao et al., 2020). Some of the costs include a fatigue that is experienced on their mental and physical well-being (Chance, 2022; Hill et al., 2016; Liao et al., 2020). One less harmful way to combat these issues is the soft girl movement approach which allows girls to embrace their vulnerability and softness in a world that demands toughness and resilience, encourages finding comfort in simplicity and prioritize well-being, encourages

self-awareness, setting boundaries, and accepting a slower, purposeful life, finding

empower through softness, confidence, and self-care (Cargle, 2023; Muir, 2022).

Research Questions

This section presents each research question and provides answers based on the

findings of the study.

Research Question 1

My first research question was: *How do Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women*

senior level administrators describe their experiences navigating higher education? The

findings indicated that RAEMW senior level administrators described their experiences

navigating higher education as filled with bias such as racism, sexism, and classism. They

lacked support, opportunities, and mentorships, and they experienced underutilization,

isolation, devaluation, and tokenism; and encountered the promotion of White ideologies

from their White counterparts (Carroll, 1980; Cazarez, 2020; Cokley et al., 2017;

Edwards, 2019; Howard-Vital, 1989; Jarmon, 2014; McChesney, 2018; Muñoz et al.,

2018; Ramos & Yi, 2020; Roy, 2019; Solorzano et al., 2000; SteelFisher et al., 2019;

Turner, 2002; Uzogara, 2019; Vue et al., 2017; Walkington, 2017; Wei et al., 2020). The

findings revealed that as these RAEMW senior level administrators navigated through

higher education they also experienced racism, sexism, and classism. These experiences

were mostly at the hands of their White counterparts who consciously and subconsciously

promoted White ideologies in the things that they did and said. Not only were White men

the typical sources of these macro and micro aggressions, but other women including

White women and other women of color were sources as well, preferring to position

themselves in competition with the participants rather than supporting them (Cokley et

al., 2017; Edwards, 2019; Solorzano et al., 2000; Walkington, 2017; Wei et al., 2020). Too often the participants are subjected to being tokenized by their institution as being the only or one of few RAEMW senior level administrators that hold cabinet positions.

The experiences of RAEMW senior level administrators are like a double-edged sword in which they can be the recipient of good and bad experiences. This is evident in the lack of support, opportunities, and mentorships for RAEMW senior level administrators, which they experienced very frequently as they advanced through higher education. The literature highlights how having support, opportunities, and mentorship is beneficial for RAEMW in higher education (Davis, 2022; Guilory-Lacey, 2020; Holley, 2021; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Mahatmya et al., 2022; Moore, 2013; Spicer, 2004). Some of the participants shared that there were a handful of individuals at their institution who did provide them with support, opportunities, and mentorship. The majority of these positive experiences were provided by other RAEMW at the institution and rarely came from the executive level, especially from the president of the institution. Catherine mentioned having to leave part of herself at the door in order to exist in the work environment. In doing so it shows how part of the identities of RAEMW senior level administrators are not valued at the institution. In order for RAEMW administrators to feel like they are valued and belong at the institution they feel the need to assimilate to the historical institutional policies, practices, and customs (Greenstein, 2017). This assimilation is what prevents change from occurring within institutions of higher education due to the maintenance of that status quo (Calvo, 2018). Institutions of higher education often espouse a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging;

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however, institutions of higher education actions speak louder than their words and reveal what is a priority (Kuh, 2000).

Some participants also experienced underutilization, isolation, and devaluation as they navigated higher education (Cardena, 2016; Carroll, 1980; Elenes, 2020; Garcia, 2020; Nieves-Squires, 1991; Sanchez-Zamora, 2013). They are underutilized throughout the entire institution and are often limited to their area of expertise. However, some participants also experienced the opposite and are overworked by individuals who are not willing to put in the effort to learn and simply rely on the one person at the institution to do their work for them. The participants also shared how isolating it can be in these roles and having no one to be able to talk to within the institution and that they have to rely on their external networks or communities to share their experiences with. From a historical context higher education has been highly valued by society (Greenstein, 2017). However, the participants described feeling devalued by colleagues who overstep and feel that they can do their job better than the participants can (Miller & Vaughn, 1997). There is also a lack of respect that the participants experienced by individuals at all levels of the institution including senior leaders not caring enough to learn the name of the RAEMW administrator, being sabotaged and yelled at by White women, and having to justify their existence at the institution.

Research Question 2

My second research question was: *How do senior level Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women administrators describe the impact of institutional environments on their career advancement in higher education?* The findings indicated that institutional environments have a positive and negative impact on the career advancement of

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RAEMW senior level administrators due to the fact that working at PWIs make their intersectional identities more visible. Not only have these participants worked at a 4-year PWI in the U.S., but they have also worked at other types of institutional environments providing them with some experience and perspective as to how the institution has impacted their career advance in higher education. Participants felt that they were more supported working in an environment with people who look like them (Rudick et al., 2017; Smith, 2015; Wolfe & Freeman, 2013). Each institution is vastly different and has different climate, culture, and leadership styles (National Association for College Admission Counseling, 2022). For example, Brenda believed women of color were either viewed as valued or necessary but never both (Kuh, 2000; Pascarella, 1985; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, 2005). Furthermore, participants also revealed that because they work at a PWI and are the only, or one of a few, RAEMW administrators they are taxed with being involved on several committees (Austin, 1984; Geary, 2016). While working at PWIs as the only women of color, the participants are more visible, and this visibility is part of the institutional environment effect. Brenda and Dorothy mentioned that there are a lot of committees and being one of a few RAEMW senior level administrators they are invited to be on a lot of committees outside of their scope of responsibilities. Though having some experience and involvement with committee work is helpful for their career advancement, the level of committee involvement described by participants can be detrimental to it as well (Austin, 1984; Geary, 2016; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009; Turner, 2002; Turner et al., 2008). Additionally, institutions espoused a culture of comradery to foster a sense of family, however, their employee demographics are not reflective of their student demographic population (Dougé, 2020; Gasman et al., 2015;

Guiffrida & Douthit, 2010; Lee, 2002; Peterson & Spencer, 1990; Simms, 2018; Stewart, 2013; Tierney & Landford, 2018; Wolfe & Freeman, 2013). Administrators, especially RAEMW administrators are essential to establishing an institutional culture and climate within higher education that will be reflective of the student population but visibly they are a few if not the only RAEMW administrator at their PWI (Hoppes & Holley, 2014; Logue & Anderson, 2001; Maestas et al., 2007; Milliken, 1990; Roby et al., 2013; Strange, 2003; Strange & Banning, 2001; Tierney & Lanford, 2018).

While discussing career advancement in higher education, some participants emphasized the influence of institutional type. Certain institutions possess greater resources, affording them the freedom to innovate and drive necessary changes for institutional growth. Curiously, Gloria wondered whether working at a different type of institution—such as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), a Minority-Serving Institution (MSI), or even a community college—would allow her to make a more significant impact. What she discovered is that regardless of institutional type, her presence in senior leadership positions is crucial not only for students but also for faculty, staff, and themselves. Furthermore, another participant learned that taking on projects, demonstrating their benefits to the college or university, and achieving success while enhancing their boss's reputation can propel them to the next level. However, some participants revealed that it is not so much the institutional environment itself that has impacted their career advancement but certain situations that have occurred or specific individuals. For example, Dorothy shared how they found out that a colleague of theirs put in a good word for them to be considered for a promotion or position because they saw how they spoke, carried themselves, and operated within the institution.

My third research question was: *How can intersectionality, counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, and interest convergence inform research on Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women's experiences as senior level administrators?* The findings indicated that these four concepts can inform research on RAEMW experiences as administrators by recognizing the multiple and intersecting identities and oppressions that these administrators face, including sexism and racism. The intersectionality tenet of CRT and Crenshaw's (1989, 1991, 2015) intersectionality framework combined serves as an analytical framework and a form of resistance, highlighting power dynamics and the interlocking forms of oppression and privilege across cultural, structural, interpersonal, and disciplinary contexts (Collins & Bilge, 2016). The participants bring every aspect of their identities to work in the way that they think, act, and behave, and the responses they receive from colleagues and students reflect their intersectional identities; it was not possible for them to distinguish whether their gender or their race/ethnicity was driving the responses they received. Counter-storytelling is a practice embraced by minoritized faculty, staff, and students in higher education, that enables them to critically examine the institutional climate and express their lived experiences of marginalization (Decuir & Dixon, 2004; Farber, 1994; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997). Through their narratives, they reclaim agency and challenge dominant narratives that often overlook or silence their voices. The participants told their stories, a method of counter-storytelling to challenge the dominant narratives and stereotypes that limit and silence RAEMW's voices and perspectives; the participants are open and vocal about who they are and how they arrived in the positions that they are in

today not only to students but to anyone that would listen (Ladson-Billing, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Picower, 2009). Most research in the literature about the experiences of RAEMW has historically been based from a deficit perspective that does not account for the racist and sexist environments that RAEMW administrators work in and how this deficit-based literature devalues their experiences and contributions to the field of higher education (Decuir & Dixon, 2004; Farber, 1994; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997). However, the data provides a non-deficit perspective. The enduring existence of racism underscores how White ideologies and values permeate societal norms, policies, and cultural structures, perpetuating White supremacy (Ladson-Billing, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Picower, 2009). Acknowledging the permanence and pervasiveness of racism in higher education and its impact on RAEMW's access, retention, and advancement was clear through the experiences participants had with racism and sexism stemming from other senior level administrators and colleagues who are not conscious of the harm that they are inflicting on these women (Ladson-Billing, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Picower, 2009). Harm is not only emotional but also manifests itself in a physical form that affects the health and wellness of the participants. Another form of harm is present in White privilege which often limits the opportunities and benefits of RAEMW's administrators; the participants shared how institutions support and allow for White policies, practices, and behaviors to continue to be perpetuated by White men in the twenty-first century (Bell, 1995a, 1995b). The interest convergence tenet posits that the advancement of racially minoritized individuals' rights occurs only when their interests align with those of White people or those in positions of power (Bell, 1995a, 1995b).

This finding is evident in the data in the form of mentorship and for Fabiola the visible and vocal support from a chancellor in supporting the work she does. Neither the mentorship, nor the chancellor's support would occur if not in the mentor and chancellor's best interests. By applying these concepts, research on RAEMW's experiences as administrators can reveal the structural and systemic barriers that these women encounter, as well as the strategies and resources that the participants used to address these barriers. Such research can also inform policies and practices that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education. The following section will examine how the findings relate to the theoretical framework of this study.

Theoretical Framework

I used my theoretical framework to examine my three research questions and the study's findings that helped me comprehend the interplay of these theories. This study used four tenets of CRT that include: counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, interest convergence, and intersectionality which is used in conjunction with the intersectionality framework (Bell, 1995a, 1995b; Collective, 1983; Collins, 1991; Crenshaw, 1989, 1994, 2015; Decuir & Dixon, 2004; Farber, 1994; Freeman, 1977; Grillo, 1995; Hiraldo, 2010, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2013; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Picower, 2009). Crenshaw (1989, 1994, 2015) employs the concept of intersectionality as a theoretical framework lens to examine the experiences of Black women considering both their gender and race together rather than in isolation. It is Crenshaw's (1989, 1994, 2015) intersectionality framework that is at the core of the participants' experiences. The fourth tenet, intersectionality, recognized the interplay between race, gender, class, and sexual orientation that affects an individual's position

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within larger social structures (Carastathis, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989, 1994, 2015; Collins, 1991; Grillo, 1995; Hiraldo, 2010, 2019). When combined, intersectionality shows that people's experiences are not simple or isolated, but rather complex and interrelated in relation to power. It is only through this intersectionality that these other experiences related to counter-storytelling, the permanence of racism, and interest convergence happen.

The first tenet, counter-storytelling, empowered minoritized faculty, staff, and students in higher education to assess the climate and use their stories to express their experiences with discrimination (Decuir & Dixon, 2004; Farber, 1994; Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997). Counter-storytelling is a critical component to this study because without it the importance of and influence of intersectionality or the permanence of racism is not fully illustrated. The findings showed that participants encountered constituents at the institution who thought that if they were working there that the participant could not be in a high-level position. The participants shared their experiences with colleagues and students who presumed that it was impossible for them to be at the senior level and to be competent to do the work that is expected with such a highly prestigious and exclusive position as cabinet members. Instances like that can be used as an example in diversity, equity, and inclusion training to inform others of what RAEMW senior level administrators endure. This challenged the dominant ideologies that only White males can successfully hold senior level positions at institutions of higher education, more specifically at PWIs. These findings also shifted the narrative and deficit-perspective that RAEMW administrators are often viewed from.

The second tenet, the permanence of racism, illustrated how White beliefs and values are at the core of social policies and cultures that uphold White supremacy (Hiraldo, 2010, 2019; Ladson-Billing, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Picower, 2009). The findings showed that participants work at institutions of higher education that are rooted in White ideologies which are reflected in their policies and practices. A few participants shared how their work and presence have changed policies. These policy changes not only have a positive influence for students but also administrators. The participants shared how there are small ways in which important shifts and big shifts are being made at their institutions due to their presence such as the removal of a racist name off of a main campus building that had articles written about it. Though that change was big, it is not enough, and institutions of higher education have yet to reach a place where racism and all other forms of discrimination are no longer issues. Years of racism and sexism within institutions of higher education cannot be eliminated overnight. RAEMW senior level administrators were being promoted based on performance while their colleagues were being promoted based on their potential. Additionally, the findings showed that one RAEMW senior level administrator's White male colleagues expressed they were not satisfied with nor trusting of RAEMW's ability to fulfill their roles and responsibilities. The White male colleague felt a sense of entitlement and power over the participant to not think twice about copying the president of the institution on an issue that could have been resolved with a simple conversation.

The third tenet, interest convergence, examines the conflicting policies and practices of higher education institutions regarding diversity of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation among RAEMW senior level administrators (Bell, 1995a, 1995b). The

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foundation of interest convergence highlights how progress will be made only when the interest of Whites align with the interests of racial and ethnic minoritized people. Interest convergence is present in the form of mentorship as mentoring would not occur if it were not somehow in the best interest of the White mentors. This interest could be their desire to give back, an altruistic idea of giving back, or because in the current higher education climate in order for institutions to look legitimate they have to have diverse administrators and a diversity, equity, and inclusion division. Catherine reported being invited to meetings and involved in projects to please someone's boss when they were truly not wanted there. While at these meetings and working on these projects, Catherine's presence is only used for maintaining the status quo and for checking off the diversity, equity, and inclusion box.

The findings showed that participants have encounters in which they cannot pinpoint the source of oppression that is impacting their experiences while navigating higher education. This ties back to the concept of intersectionality as it highlighted how multiple identities intersect to create unique patterns of oppressions (Carastathis, 2016; Crenshaw, 1989, 1994, 2015; Collins, 1991; Grillo, 1995; Hiraldo, 2010, 2019). The findings showed how the stories shared by the participants accurately captured the true voices and lived experiences of RAEMW that conflict with what is written in the literature. This ties back to the CRT's counter-storytelling tenet, as it highlighted counter-stories of RAEMW are powerful tools that allowed for their voices to be heard, to disrupt dominant narratives, and foster a deeper understanding of the complexities of race, racism, and power. The findings also showed how racism is deeply embedded in institutions of higher education which is reflected in its policies, practices, and

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procedures. This ties back to the CRT's the permanence of racism tenet, as it underscored the need to critically examine the enduring impact of racism and recognize that true progress requires addressing deeply entrenched systems and beliefs. Lastly, findings also revealed how PWIs of higher education have the power to change several factors that hinder the growth and development of RAEMW administrators. This ties back to the CRT's interest convergence tent, as it highlighted that the advancements for RAEMW occur when their interests coincide with those of the White power structure.

Implications

Implications for Research

The study excluded RAEMW senior level administrators who were not currently working at PWIs in the U.S. for at least a year. Many other RAEMW have years of knowledge and experiences to share. Future research should examine these women's experiences at other institutional types and their reasons for leaving PWIs or higher education altogether; these data could be advantageous to understanding change in institutional climate and culture. Additionally, the study was limited to RAEMW senior level administrators who work at 4-year PWIs in the U.S. Replicating this study and examining the experiences of RAEMW senior level administrators at 2-year PWIs in the U.S. or 4-year HSIs or MSIs may yield interesting data that could be compared to their peers at 4-year PWIs in the U.S. This data could provide some context or perspective on the level of influence an institutional environment has on RAEMW senior level administrators' experiences. The participants in this study were limited to senior level RAEMW administrators and not racialized minoritized men senior level RAEMW administrators who may share similar or differing experiences on their decision to begin a

career in higher education and the success of their career advancement. A replication of this research study with racial and ethnic minoritized men's senior level administrators at 4-year PWIs in the U.S. as participants is recommended as this would permit a comparison to women's experience of the phenomenon. The study does not include entry level or mid-level RAEMW administrators however, some of the senior level RAEMW administrators may have some experiences at these levels and would be able to share and highlight how it impacted the success they experienced in their career. Furthermore, including senior level administrators from all racial and ethnic backgrounds could give greater breadth. The literature illustrated the different experiences that RAEMW specifically, Asian, Black, and Latinx have in higher education as senior level administrators. Gathering the unique experiences of each of these groups of women, as well as additional minoritized groups can be useful in the development and implementation of equitable policies and practices. Lastly, research should be conducted on how the different institutional environments in higher education provide support for RAEMW senior level administrators that impact their experiences and their career advancements. This data could reveal the values and priorities that a particular institutional type might embrace and how that either helps or hinders RAEMW senior level administrators' success and advancement.

Implications for Practice

A practical implication is that the research and findings from this study may be used to increase the low 5.9% of RAEMW senior level administrators at PWIs to be more reflective of the student population and get institutions of higher education to be more intentional about who they hire (Schmidt, 2020). It can provide a potential action plan for

institutions of higher education to use to increase the percentage of RAEMW senior level administrators at PWIs in the U.S. by identifying strategies to cultivate, support, and retain them. This study can fill the gap in understanding what factors, experiences, or communities influence RAEMW to decide that they want to pursue a career in higher education as an administrator at the senior level. Implications for practice would also include the creation of pipelines within the higher education system that would better position aspiring RAEMW administrators. It could help in the restructuring of higher education institutional policies, practices, and structure to attract, retain, support, advance, and improve the experiences of current and aspiring RAEMW senior level administrators. The stories of the administrators in this study highlight the fact that these RAEMW administrators experience racism and sexism at the senior level at their PWIs (Chung, 2009; Garcia, 2020; Jackson & O'Callaghan, 2009; Li & Beckett, 2006). Institutions of higher education should be aware of instances of micro- and macroaggressions and facilitate opportunities for RAEMW senior level administrators to discuss and process their experiences with these aggressions. Additionally, institutions of higher education have a responsibility to facilitate and guide critical conversations about race, racism, and sexism at the administrative level. Creating spaces where RAEMW administrators and White administrators alike are required to engage in topics related to race, racism, and sexism, may contribute to improving the culture and climate for RAEMW administrators at various institutions of higher education. Tokenism and racial battle fatigue played a significant role in the experiences of these RAEMW administrators (Cokley et al., 2017; Edwards, 2019; Solorzano et al., 2000; Walkington, 2017; Wei et al., 2020). Highlighting RAEMW administrators on websites, brochures,

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and recruitment events but neglecting their needs harms both current and prospective

RAEMW senior level administrators. Another implication of practice is the formal

creation of a mentoring and partnership program upon hire that would match RAEMW

senior level administrators with a mentor within the institution and/or a mentor outside

the institution that would provide the support that they need to be successful.

Additionally, institutions, especially PWIs, may alleviate some of the burden of racial

battle fatigue by educating themselves about racism and not relying on RAEMW senior

level administrators to educate their White peers about their experiences (Cokley et al.,

2017; Edwards, 2019; Jones & Kunkle, 2022; Solorzano et al., 2000; Walkington, 2017;

Wei et al., 2020). Most of all, institutions need to ensure that all their employees are

educated, not just senior level administrators. Diversity should be viewed as a process,

not as a goal. To promote diversity and inclusion in educational leadership programs,

institutions should implement intentional interventions that address the

underrepresentation of RAEMW senior level administrators, provide training programs in

educational leadership programs that recognize cultural and gender differentiation, and

commit to guiding these women to help them overcome barriers (Clark et al., 1999;

Cotter et al., 2001; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Isabela, 2018; Jarmon, 2014; Liang &

Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Montez, 1998; Upadhyay, 2014). Researchers and practitioners

must critically reflect on their own positions within intersecting systems of power. This

reflexivity ensures ethical and responsible engagement with intersectionality. Lastly, the

findings may lead to changes within institutions of higher education regarding the lack of

RAEMW senior level administrators as they become more knowledgeable regarding how

these women navigated the pathway to their current positions. The unique barriers that the participants experience can all be used as teachable moments within DEI trainings.

Implications for Policy

Implications for policy would include policies that invest in RAEMW senior level administrators to ensure that they feel both needed and valued in the work that they do. To address the discrimination these women experience, institutions should have a discrimination policy that is clear and actionable. This discrimination policy should ensure that the work environment is a safe space for RAEMW senior level administrators to have a voice, obtain support in finding their voice, and sharing their voice with others. To address the lack of promotion that these women experience (Roy, 2019; SteelFisher et al., 2019), a contractual policy should be implemented that automatically provides free professional coaching. Another policy implication should be one that protects RAEMW senior level administrators from being overworked and overwhelmed with additional committee involvement outside of their role and responsibilities. Their time is valuable and should be protected at every cost. Mentorship is also a critical component of the success that RAEMW senior level administrators had as they navigated the field of higher education. These mentorships were oftentimes informal and were typically with individuals outside of the work environment. A policy implication could be a policy that mandates all new hires be provided with a mentor within the institution and/or a mentor outside the institution that would provide the support that they need to be successful. Finances are also a barrier that hinders RAEMW senior level administrators from reaching their full potential and ensuring that the vision that they have for institutional change can come to fruition. Another policy implication should be an institutional policy

that clarifies funding support and how it is allocated so that RAEMW senior level administrators are aware of what it will take to secure funding to engage in professional development opportunities and hire the personnel they need (Roy, 2019; SteelFisher et al., 2019). To promote diversity and inclusion in educational leadership programs, institutions should have a policy that outlines the intentional interventions used to address the underrepresentation of RAEMW senior level administrators and to help them overcome barriers (Clark et al., 1999; Cotter et al., 2001; Davis & Maldonado, 2015; Isabela, 2018; Jarmon, 2014; Liang & Peters-Hawkins, 2017; Montez, 1998; Upadhyay, 2014). This study can help administrators, legislators, and others in institutions of higher education to develop innovative solutions that address the issue of the lack of RAEMW administrators in senior leadership positions.

Implications for Theory

A study that explores the lived experiences of RAEMW senior level administrators at 4-year PWIs in the U.S. can have implications for the theories of intersectionality and CRT. The study contributes to these theories by providing new insights into how multiple dimensions of identity and oppression shape the experiences and perspectives of these women. The study challenges the dominant narratives and stereotypes of RAEMW senior level administrators at PWIs, and highlights their agency, resilience, and resistance in the face of racism and sexism. The study illuminated how the personal and professional identities of RAEMW senior level administrators are influenced by the intersection of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and other factors, and how they negotiate these identities in different contextual situations. The study documented how RAEMW senior level administrators cope with the challenges and opportunities of

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leading within the institution. The study detailed how RAEMW senior level administrators enact their leadership styles and practices, and how they are perceived and evaluated by others, in relation to the norms and expectations of PWIs in the U.S. The study contributes to the development of new frameworks and models for understanding and supporting the career advancement and success of RAEMW senior level administrators at PWIs in the U.S. Lastly, this study also extends what we currently know about CRT and Crenshaw's intersectionality framework. In CRT, the intersectionality tenet is not one that is used by everyone in their academic research. Yet, this study highlights the importance of intersectional identities and of incorporating the tenet within CRT, which is critical to understanding the full experiences of those who are marginalized or minoritized based on their social identity. Though Crenshaw's (1989, 1994, 2015) intersectionality framework was about Black women, this study expands this application to other racial and ethnic minoritized groups as well as other intersectional identities. This inclusivity ensures that no one's experiences are overlooked or simplified. By extending our knowledge about these frameworks, we move away from rigid categories and recognize the fluidity of identity. This study does inform the importance of intersectionality in CRT and a theoretical implication is that anyone using CRT should always focus on intersectionality identities.

Conclusion

I initiated this study to better understand the experiences of senior level RAEMW administrators at 4-year PWIs in the U.S. and analyze the impact of institutional environments on their success. There is little literature on the experiences of higher education administrators, however, there is even less literature on the experiences of

RAEMW senior level administrators, specifically those that work at 4-year PWIs in the U.S. This study is significant as it explores the intersection of RAEMW senior level administrators' career advancement and institutional environments and provides a foundation for how institutions of higher education can successfully support RAEMW senior level administrators. It also provides RAEMW with a better holistic understanding of what it entails to be a higher education senior level administrator. The findings revealed that women senior level administrators who sit on the cabinet at their PWI shared similar experiences such as racism, sexism, tokenism, etc. regardless of their racial and ethnic identities. However, there are still slight differences in the experiences of RAEMW senior level administrators in higher education based on other identities such as sexual orientation and religion or belief and how that impacts their success and advancement.

After talking with the seven RAEMW senior level administrators, I was inspired to see how dedicated and passionate these administrators were to ensure that they produce excellent work while also maintaining their dignity and sanity despite the barriers and challenges they experienced while navigating higher education. These administrators were dedicated to their work and to ensuring that they paved the way for those who would come behind them. This study revealed to me the power and importance of sharing the stories of RAEMW administrators and how they are unapologetic about who they are regardless of what history has said. This study also revealed to me the need for advocacy and support from institutions of higher education to provide sufficient funding, mentorship, professional development, and physical space to foster a sense of belonging and community for RAEMW senior level administrators. This study revealed

an overwhelming need for the development and investment in higher education administration programs that adequately prepare administrators on how to create, promote, and sustain higher education institutions that are diversified, supportive, proactive, intentional, and consciously working to dismantle White ideologies and discrimination. Future administrators must be prepared to be the example and foster diversity, equity, and inclusion conscious institutions because without adequate instruction and support this will not occur. How can one advance their career if there is no commitment and actual evidence of moving the needle forward?

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Introduction

This interview is intended to provide an in-depth understanding of how your **experiences as a** senior level Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women (RAEMW) administrator at a 4-year Predominately White Institution (PWI) and the impact of institutional environments on your success. As I would like to learn about your experiences and stories, I intend for our interview time to be much more of a conversation today. At times, it might seem unstructured. There are no right or wrong answers, so you can answer the questions in any way that feels comfortable for you. We can also take time if you need to pause, breathe or think through the questions. I also want to remind you that I am going to keep your participation in this study confidential, so only the Principal Investigator (dissertation chair) and I will know that you participated in this study. Do you have any questions for me?

Demographic Information
1. Please tell me about yourself?
   a. Racial and ethnic identity?
   b. Socioeconomic status/religion or belief/family dynamics (e.g. immediate family unit spouse, kids)?
2. Tell me about your decision to begin a career in higher education.

Experiences in Higher Education
3. Describe your process in becoming a senior level administrator.
4. Tell me what it is like to be a Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women (RAEMW) senior level administrator at a Predominately White Institution?
5. Describe your experiences with barriers and support.
6. Who or what has been your strongest allies and supports in keeping you in your role?
7. Tell me how your different identities shaped your experiences? Specifically, thinking about the interplay between identity and institutional environment.
8. Thinking about your experiences navigating higher education, what, if any, would you change? Why?

Institutional Environments
9. Describe your experiences with institutional environments (e.g. climate, culture, demographics etc.).
10. Describe how institutional environments impacted the success of your career advancement.
11. How has your presence over the time that you have been working here impacted the environment at your institution?

Wrap-up

Appendix B

Email and Recruitment Letter

Rowan University

Email and Letter Recruitment Template

Email Subject/Letter Heading: The "Essence" from within: A Phenomenological study of RAEMW senior level administrators

Hello,

I am writing to you about a volunteer opportunity to participate in a research study titled: The "Essence" from within: A Phenomenological study examining the lived experiences of Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women (RAEMW) senior level administrators at 4-year Predominately White Institutions in the U.S. This research study is investigating the experiences of senior level RAEMW administrators who work in PWIs and analyze the impact of institutional environments on their success. Potential benefits of this important research study are to help enhance our ability to develop a better understanding of the experiences of RAEMW senior level administrators in higher education that would in general benefit the society.

You may volunteer to participate in this study if you are a Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women (RAEMW) senior level administrators, specifically those that identify as Asian, Black, Latinx or bi-racial who has at least one year experience, and currently works at Predominately White Institution in the United States. Your participation will require you to participate in a 60-90 minute virtual interview and to review the transcription of the interview for accuracy. This research study will take place virtually on Zoom, Webex or Google Hangout.

Contact Felicia Crockett at crockettf6@students.rowan.edu about this research study.

This study has been approved by Rowan University's IRB (Study # PRO-2023-48).

Sincerely,

Felicia Crockett

Version Date: 01/26/2022

Rowan University
PRO-2023-48
Approved on 3-29-2023

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Appendix C

Listserv Recruitment

Rowan University

Rowan Daily Mail and Other Listserv Advertisement Template

Listserv Header/Subject: The "Essence" from within: A Phenomenological study of RAEMW senior level administrators

Are you interested in volunteering to participate in a research study about the experiences of senior level Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women (RAEMW) administrators who work in PWIs and analyze the impact of institutional environments on their success? Are you a Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women (RAEMW) senior level administrators, specifically those that identify as Asian, Black, Latinx or bi-racial who has at least one year experience, and currently works at Predominately White Institution in the United States? Potential benefits of this important research study are to help enhance our ability to develop a better understanding of the experiences of RAEMW senior level administrators in higher education that would in general benefit the society. As a volunteer participant, you will participate in a 60-90 minute virtual interview and to review the transcription of the interview for accuracy. This study will take place virtually on Zoom, Webex, or Google Hangout. Contact Felicia Crockett at crockettf6@students.rowan.edu about this research study. This study has been approved by Rowan University's IRB (Study # PRO-2023-48).

Version Date: 01/26/2022

Appendix D

Flyer Text Recruitment

Rowan University

The "Essence" from within: A Phenomenological study of higher education senior level administrators

Are you interested in participating in a research study about the experiences of higher education senior level administrators?

Criteria:
Are you Female?
Are you Asian, Black, Latinx, or bi-racial?
Are you currently a senior level administrator?
Do you work at Predominantly White Institution (PWI) in the United States)?
Do you have at least one year experience as a senior level administrator?
Are you willing to share your experiences?

Purpose:
The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of senior level Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women (RAEMW) administrators who work in 4-year Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and analyze the impact of institutional environments on their success.

Commitment:
This study will include an interview lasting roughly 60-90 minutes.

Location:
This study will be conducted virtually through Zoom, Webex or Google Hangout.

Contact:
If you are interested in participating and meet the criteria, please email Felicia Crockett at crockettf6@students.rowan.edu for more information.

This study has been approved by Rowan University's IRB (Study # PRO-2023-48).

Title: The "Essence" from within: A Phenomenological Study Examining the Lived Experiences of Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women (RAEMW) Senior Level Administrators at 4-year Predominately White Institutions in the U.S.
Principal Investigator: MaryBeth Walpole

ELECTRONIC INFORMED CONSENT (ADULTS)
KEY INFORMATION TO TAKE PART IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE OF STUDY: The "Essence" from within: A Phenomenological Study Examining the Lived Experiences of Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women (RAEMW) Senior Level Administrators at 4-year Predominately White Institutions in the U.S.
Principal Investigator: MaryBeth Walpole

You are being asked to take part in a research study. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of senior level RAEMW administrators who work in 4-yr PWIs and analyze the impact of institutional environments on their success.

If you agree, you will be asked to *participate in a virtual 60-90 minute interview and to review the transcript from your interview for accuracy*. Your participation in this study will last *until you review your transcript for accuracy*. Participation is completely voluntary. It is up to you to decide if you would like to participate.

The risks associated with this study are minimal. *You are not expected to receive any direct benefits from participating in this study. However, you may indirectly benefit by helping enhance our ability to develop a better understanding of the experiences of Racial and Ethnic Minoritized Women (RAEMW) senior level administrators in higher education that would in general benefit the society.*

If you are interested in participating, please carefully review the informed consent form on the next screen. This consent form is part of an informed consent process for a research study and it will provide you with more detailed information that will help you decide whether you wish to volunteer for this research study. It is important that you take your time to make your decision. You may share this consent form with a family member or anyone else before agreeing to participate in the study.

If you have questions at any time, you should feel free to ask the study team and should expect to be given answers that you completely understand. The study team will answer any question you might have before volunteering to take part in this study. You can also request that the study team read the consent form to you over the phone.

Felicia Crockett
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
crockettf6@students.rowan.edu
862-200-8645

[ ] I would like to review the informed consent form.

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Version #: 2
Version Date: 3/11/2023

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