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WOOSAH! MINORITIZED STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS:
NAVIGATING RACIAL BATTLE FATIGUE AT A PREDOMINATELY WHITE INSTITUTION

by

Julius J. Grayson

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Doctor of Education
at
Rowan University
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Dedications

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents for always believing in me! Thank you for your vision, wisdom, and love. You all have always been in my corner supporting and challenging me to do exceedingly and abundantly more than I could have imagined. I am nothing without you, and I thank God for placing you all as my parents!

To my wife Ashlee, and daughter Savay, you both provided me with the strength, determination, and discipline needed along this journey. Ashlee, your support, encouragement, plus long nights and weekends with our soon to be three-year-old have been invaluable! I cannot begin to express my gratitude for you, your love, and support.

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Abstract

Julius J. Grayson
WOOSAH! MINORITIZED STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS:
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INSTITUTION
2023-2024
James Coaxum, Ph.D.
Doctor of Education

Using an interpretative phenomenological analysis this study explored the rich experiences of seven racially minoritized student affairs professionals (RMSAPs) who experienced racial battle fatigue (RBF) and the impact it had on their health at a predominantly white institution (PWI). Social psychological research has identified both blatant and subtle forms of racial discrimination have adverse which lead to deleterious mental health outcomes for racially minoritized individuals.

The findings indicated that these racially minoritized student affairs professionals were experiencing racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue at their predominately white institution. In order to reclaim their wellness, participants shared the strategies they used to sustain their commitment to advocating and supporting minoritized students. These findings also included the recommendations that participants had for their PWI and how they could support their health and well-being and diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

Keywords: racial battle fatigue, racial microaggressions, student affairs professionals, well-being.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Racially minoritized groups looking for career opportunities, professional development, and social mobility in higher education have faced unique challenges with institutional racism and campus racial climates (Anderson, 2021; Pierce, 1970; Rudenstine, 2001; Savas, 2014). These unique challenges at predominantly white institutions (PWIs) include racial climates where "Black student affairs professionals must combat racism, blocked opportunities," and different levels of environmental stress (Husband, 2016; p. 91). As colleges and universities become more diverse, campus environments and environmental stressors are unwelcoming, hostile, unsafe, and alienating in nature to racially minoritized people (Hurtado, 1992; Husband, 2016). Overt racial conflict on college campuses can no longer be viewed as anomalies or isolated incidents as they are "indicators of a more general problem of unresolved racial issues in college environments and in society at large" (Husband, 2016, p. 91).

Moreover, race and racism significantly affects the life-chances of minoritized people in predominantly white spaces (Savas, 2014). White hegemony over non-Whites has distinguished a racialized social order that has been prevalent in U.S. society dating back to the 1500s and the triangular slave trade (Savas, 2014). As a result, U.S. society has been socially structured based on race and reinforced by white supremacist ideology, which has prioritized Whites with respect to social, political, and economic opportunities and advantages (Patton, 2016; Wennersten, 1991; Wilder, 2013).

For instance, after the Reconstruction Era, there was Jim Crow, which maintained segregation and the racialized social order, which shaped the reality for racially

minoritized people, especially in education (Alexander, 2010; Bonilla-Silva, 1997; DeGruy, 2006; Savas, 2014). Through segregation, although Blacks were to be included in the education system, they were alienated and unwelcomed. As education provided skills and jobs to meet the demands of society, the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 and other postwar Reconstruction policies restricted and denied Black people access to political, economic, and educational resources and opportunities (Wennersten, 1991; Wilder, 2013).

The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890 was established to provide access to higher education for Blacks (Wennersten, 1991). However, with the establishment of the grant, education for Blacks at these land-grant institutions was still inferior as state officials were more concerned with not jeopardizing federal funding for white schools (Wennersten, 1991). Through legislatures, Whites justified financial discrimination and alienation against Black schools claiming that Blacks needed less complex and expensive education compared to Whites (Wennersten, 1991; Patton, 2016). The white agenda for Black land-grant institutions also included white control (Wennersten, 1991). The strategy included maintaining institutions that were industrial-focused as opposed to teacher-training institutions, which would have provided Black communities with quality education and access to social mobility for their youth including social, political, and economic opportunities (Patton, 2016; Wennersten, 1991).

Although there have been significant efforts to increase access and representation inequalities in higher education, the mechanisms used to increase representation and access for Blacks, Latina/os, and racially minoritized peoples in higher education have been a contentious debate (Franklin et al., 2014; Rudenstine, 2001). Similar obstacles

also impeded persistence access and graduation for Latina/os due to discrimination and structural racism (Franklin et al., 2014). As such, conversations focused on meritocracy and campus climates have highlighted racial conflicts that are still persistent campus issues that need addressing. Unwelcoming campus climates, racial tension, and racism have permeated the experience of Black students and faculty alike exposing them to racial microaggressions in higher education.

Harvard psychiatrist Chester Pierce (1970) conceptualized racial microaggressions in the 1970s, as racial offenses that are subtle and stunning as opposed to gross and crippling. This seminal work by Pierce developed the groundwork for research and literature provided by Sue et al. (2007). Sue et al. (2007) provided a definition of racial microaggressions which included “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group” (p. 273). Williams et al. (2021) asserted that the absence of understanding the elusive dynamics of subtle racism is still a high risk and that racial microaggressions will continue to harm minoritized people, their lives, and standard of living without adequate attention or understanding.

Scholars have used critical race theory (CRT) to further assert that race and racism is embedded in the U.S. legal systems and social structures (Patton, 2016; Savas, 2014). Racism goes beyond just the individual level and is more subtle, insidious, and invisible in U.S. society in contrast to the postwar Reconstruction Era (Alexander, 2010; DeGruy, 2006; Patton, 2016; Savas, 2014). CRT also identifies that Whites do not support overt racist behavior or slavery; however, white supremacy is still pervasive via

color-blindness and meritocracy (Patton, 2016; Savas, 2014). Examples of this in education were exhibited after rulings such as *Brown v. Board of Education* 1954, which desegregated schools. As a result, whiteness was set as the standard in education while Black students were bussed into schools that did not accept them, Black schools were closed due to funding, and Black teachers were classified as inferior juxtaposed to White teachers (Patton, 2016; Savas, 2014). As the exclusion of Blacks from high-achieving institutions of higher education became more evident, national leaders began developing policies and programs to ameliorate the inequities, and this was the impetus to affirmative action (Savas, 2014).

Affirmative action included policies and programs to improve educational opportunities for individuals who have suffered from systematic historical discrimination; this policy provided Blacks with more of an opportunity to gain access to higher education and selective colleges and universities. Although U.S. colleges and universities have recruited more racially minoritized students, these institutions maintain inequality where racially minoritized students perceive a hostile racial climate due to complex campus environments that produce racial tension (Savas, 2014). Furthermore, Ladson-Billings (1995) connected the disadvantages racially minoritized students face at PWIs to the unequal treatment they receive in society, which includes lower quality education and health services ultimately leading to higher rates of sickness and death (Patton, 2016; Savas, 2014).

Moreover, scholars argued that racially minoritized faculty indeed operate within a system of whiteness in which white supremacy provides advantages to Whites over racially minoritized people (Arnold et al., 2016; Patton, 2016). Unless postsecondary

institutions modify policies and procedures, their diversity efforts will continue to exacerbate instead of ameliorate inequalities that Black faculty and student affairs professionals experience in cultures and campus climates that do not support them or their advancement (Arnold et al., 2016; Patton, 2016). Arnold et al. examined the emotional, psychological, and physiological effects of racial microaggressions on Black faculty going through the tenure process, which could lead to faculty experiencing racial microaggressions. For Black faculty in predominantly white professional settings, racial microaggressions consequently strained relations with White colleagues, resulted in one's credentials being questioned, included a lack of respect from White colleagues, as well as, but not limited to, social and professional alienation (Arnold et al., 2016; Fields, 2007).

While colleges and universities are focused on increasing diversity, their strategies primarily serve the interests of White people and do not disrupt structures and climates built on racism (Yosso et al., 2009). With faculty and student affairs professionals being called on to respond to racism, their students are oftentimes served by racially minoritized student affairs professionals (RMSAPs). These RMSAPs also experience racial microaggressions and race-related stress, and it becomes a part of common practice to navigate their personal and professional lives. The racial microaggressions and racism are exacerbated for racially minoritized student affairs professionals specifically as they work at colleges and universities with minoritized students who have also perceived racial tension on campus (Quaye et al., 2019).

Recent literature has started to critically examine how racial microaggressions negatively affect the emotional and psychological well-being of racially minoritized

students and faculty (Nadal et al., 2019; Ong et al., 2009, 2013; Sellers & Shelton, 2003; Smith et al., 2011; Quaye et al., 2019). This is important as racial microaggressions predict health variables such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem, and understanding the literature on health and well-being provides context for emotional and physical well-being (Nadal et al., 2019).

The World Health Organization (1958) defined health as “the state of complete mental, physical, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (p.459). Additionally, well-being includes domains such as one’s emotional, psychological, and physical states (Bradburn, 1969; Ryff, 1989). Each of the aforementioned well-being domains faces detrimental outcomes when racially minoritized people are exposed to racism and racial microaggressions. As a matter of public health and social justice, this work is important in eradicating health inequities (Walters et al., 2016).

Higher education research has focused on the experience of students and faculty and the impact of racism and racial microaggressions on their health, but until recently there has been a dearth of literature on the experiences of racially minoritized student affairs professionals and their emotional, physiological, and psychological well-being. For racially minoritized student affairs professionals, predominantly white colleges and universities perpetuate racial microaggressions and race-related stress, and it is important to understand how they respond to conditions that lead to distressing emotional and psychological conditions (Quaye et al., 2019).

Problem Statement

Researchers may argue that predominantly white campuses are actually far more hostile for Black, Latina/o, and racially minoritized students and faculty than in the larger society (Feagin, 2002; Smith, 2004). However, the argument has not fully included student affairs professionals. There has been more attention on racial inequities that disproportionately impact racially minoritized populations as a result of COVID-19 since 2020 (Cho & Brassfield, 2023; Eligon et al., 2020; Harper, 2020).

With the return to in-person requirements following COVID-19 and the social injustices, racially minoritized student affairs professionals who have been negatively impacted mentally and physically are also leaving higher education institutions similarly to The Great Disillusionment and The Great Resignation (Cho & Brassfield; 2023; Ellis, 2021; Schroeder, 2021). However, research regarding how racially minoritized student affairs professionals have responded to racial inequities and microaggressions is limited.

As a result, institutionalized racism and the negative impacts on minoritized student affairs professionals in higher education are prominent issues that are rarely mentioned in the literature. Minoritized student affairs professionals must contend with racism and racial microaggressions at PWIs every day; given the historical socialization of white supremacy and slavery, minoritized, and especially Black student affairs professionals, navigate racism rooted in anti-Blackness. Research also asserted that as with many human services professions, student affairs professionals participate in interactions that cause them to lose track of their needs while providing services to others (Burke et al., 2016).

Research findings asserted that as racially minoritized people increase their educational attainment at colleges and universities, their exposure to racial microaggressions, misandry, and misogyny become less subtle (Harper, 2009; Smith et al., 2011). The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has examined and discussed how historical traumas, which are connected to race-related stress, have influenced the health of racial and ethnic minority communities over time (Mohatt et al., 2014). The race-related stress and historical trauma experienced by minoritized people has been linked to vulnerability of "diminished psychological health in later generations" and is connected but not limited to systemic racism and oppression (Mohatt et al., 2014, p. 129).

For racially minoritized student affairs professionals, any burnout is likely exacerbated by factors such as navigating hostile campus climates referred to as "racial battle fatigue" (Husband, 2016) and the expectation that racially minoritized staff perform diversity-oriented services not expected of their White colleagues (Steele, 2018). With the high demand of involvement in student affairs, the changing needs include but are not limited to academic and remedial assistance, mental health, and career and development. Additionally, postsecondary education environments participate in ranking and rating systems, recruit national and international students, and compete for funding; as such student affairs professionals are faced with increasingly demanding responsibilities.

Consequently, minoritized student affairs professionals often suffer from work–life balance challenges and racist campus climates, which ultimately produce stress and anxiety (Burke et al., 2016; Quaye et al., 2019). The challenges associated with the human services professions coupled with white supremacy, racial microaggressions, and

racial campus climates challenge the emotional, physiological, and psychological health of minoritized student affairs professionals.

Researchers contend that although equipped with self-care strategies, minoritized student affairs professionals still experienced being exhausted or have developed negative health implications from racism (Quaye et al., 2019). Researchers then resisted the notion of resilience or grit for minoritized student affairs professionals and asserted that although survival of systemic racism should be celebrated, this can prompt the acceptance of systemic racism leading to the expectation that minoritized student affairs professionals should merely cope with distressing mental and emotional conditions exacerbated by racism (Quaye et al., 2019.

Racial battle fatigue leads to racially minoritized people engaging in emotional management or an extra layer of labor after experiencing racial microaggressions and racism to the benefit of White people. Sue et al. (2008) asserted that in addition to racial microaggressions, microinsults, microinvalidations, and micro-assaults have also been identified as concepts of racial biases, racism-related stress, and prejudices. The counseling profession has further taken the necessary approach to acknowledge that “racism detrimentally affects the mental health of Black Americans" (Sue et al., 2008, p.330). In the same study Sue et al. (2008) reported that a micro-aggressor who treated a Black American as inferior would commonly be a classmate, colleague, or authority figure in an educational institution or workplace. The participants of the study reported feelings of anger, doubt, sadness, or guilt when they have experienced racial microaggressions in these settings (Sue et al., 2008).

This is significant as minoritized people manage their emotions or do not express their anger in connection with racial microaggressions and racism-related stress with White people to protect their feelings. Smith (2004, 2009b) extended the concept of racial battle fatigue and expanded it to include all minoritized people within higher education with theoretical underpinnings in health psychology, sociology, and higher education. In a study carried out by a university and college union, 70% of the Black and minority ethnic members in higher education professional positions had been subject to harassment and bullying by their White colleagues (Rollock, 2021).

Historically white institutions have perpetuated racial campus climates that are embedded with gendered racism, racial tension, blocked opportunities, and increased environmental stress for minoritized professionals (Smith et al., 2011). The emotional, physiological, and psychological cost of racism must be realized by educational, professional, and social institutions (Smith et al., 2011). Spaces that are predominantly and historically white continue to view underrepresented racial members as "other," and they are then treated in racist ways (Smith et al., 2011). Pierce (1988, 1995) asserted that regardless of place or social status, Blacks and minoritized people suffer unique stressors "as a result of threatened, perceived, and actual racism in the workplace or school" (Smith et al., 2011, p.65).

Stressors that are associated with racism impact different areas of life for those who have the experience (Husband, 2016). Some of the areas impacted include, but are not limited to, "life satisfaction, self-esteem and health" (Husband, 2016, p.95). Scholars described distress as a subjective emotional state or a reaction experienced by a person in response to ongoing stressors, challenges, and conflicts (Barnett et al., 2007). Husband

asserted that empirical research has identified that racism is an experienced stressor that has a negative influence on physical, emotional, and mental health of Black Americans.

Consequently, “Black student affairs professionals experience racial battle fatigue and racial microaggressions” (Husband, 2016, p. 96). This has negative outcomes on self-care, which is described as something an individual does to improve their subjective well-being (Husband, 2016). These burdensome experiences coupled with student development responsibilities often lead to “burnout and exhaustion because professionals’ self-care needs are disregarded” (Husband, 2016, p.96). Although racially minoritized student affairs professionals have a responsibility to sustain their holistic health, the systems of oppression must be addressed (Husband, 2016). The importance of self-care in the student affairs profession, which requires taking care of each other and dismantling systems of oppression, is needed for collective wellness (Barnett et al., 2007; Husband, 2016; Rogers, 2015)

This critical examination is important as it will explore white supremacist ideologies embedded in colleges and universities and the racial microaggressions that have an emotional, physiological, and psychological cost on the wellness of minoritized student affairs professionals (Alexander, 2010; DeGruy, 2006; Hatzenbuehler et al., 2013; Mohatt et al., 2014).

Purpose Statement

The formation of the United States was mimicked in the formation of U.S. higher education through racial and oppressive treatment of racially minoritized people in order to build and sustain white supremacy (Patton 2016; Wilder, 2013). As a result, Black, Latina/o, and racially minoritized individuals enter historically white institutions as students, faculty, and professionals with racial campus climates that are detrimental to their psychological, physiological, and behavioral health (Franklin et al., 2014; Quaye et al., 2019). The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis study was to explore how racially minoritized student affairs professionals experience racial battle fatigue at PWIs and the impact it has on their health. Race-related stress and racial microaggressions permeate higher education institutions where minoritized faculty and student affairs professionals serve diverse students who also experience racial microaggressions as a form of racism.

Consequently, with a faculty promotion and tenure process deeply embedded in white supremacy, 79% of faculty are White, and the primary beneficiaries of leadership are held by White men (Patton, 2016). National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) has 10,700 members, 10% of which have self-identified as Black or African American, 5% have self-identified as Latinx/a/o and or Hispanic, and 20.9% have self-identified as White and/or European American (A. Wesaw, personal communication, May 19, 2023).

It is important to note that of the 10,700 members, 56% of those members selected to provide no response for their race/ethnicity (A. Wesaw, personal communication, May 19, 2023). Given the stagnant culture of the leadership, policies,

and culture in higher education, there is likely to be little change in the functioning of improving the process for racially minoritized faculty and increased concern for racially minoritized student affairs professionals (Patton, 2016; Quaye et al., 2019). Understanding how racially minoritized student affairs practitioners of color respond to their challenges is missing from the literature and important for researchers and educators.

As racially minoritized student affairs professionals experience racial microaggressions and racial climates directly connected to racial health disparities, there needs to be literature that also deeply examines how these experiences surface in the personal and professional development of student affairs professionals. Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts that include the retention of students, faculty, and student affairs educators of color at colleges and universities is a continuous issue, and exploring the complexity around the racial microaggressions phenomena can provide recommendations for historically white institutions, micro-aggressors, and minoritized student affairs professionals.

Research Questions

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how racially minoritized student affairs professionals experience racial battle fatigue at PWIs. This qualitative study sought to better understand how racially minoritized student affairs professionals experience racial battle fatigue and the way it impacts their health. The research questions that guided this study:

1. How do racially minoritized student affairs professionals describe how they respond to racial microaggressions?

2. How do racially minoritized student affairs professionals describe how they respond to racial battle fatigue?
3. How do racially minoritized student affairs professionals who experience racial battle fatigue respond to the psychological, physiological, and emotional/behavioral aspects of their health?

Conceptual Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) will be the primary lens for this study as racial battle fatigue (RBF) is the phenomenon being explored. I conducted this study with CRT as the core framework as racial battle fatigue also supports the tenets of CRT. CRT identifies patterns and signs of racism and racial exclusion and provides voices and perspectives from racially minoritized people to "reexamine the terms by which race and racism have been negotiated in American consciousness" (Crenshaw et al., 1995, pg. xiv).

After the civil rights movement, scholars Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman began the process of developing racial reform using critical legal studies and radical feminism to craft the framework for CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Tate, 1997, Villalpabdo & Delgado, 2002). Thus, the central tenets of CRT were crafted to examine the "deep patterns of racial exclusion" in society (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 12).

The central tenets of CRT include first, racism is "ordinary," and not acknowledged. Second, "interest convergence" or material determinism, which identifies racism advances both working-class and elite Whites in large segments of society leaving little incentive to eradicate it for Whites (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Third is that race and races are all products of relations and social thought with no biological or genetic

reality, races are known as “social constructions” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Fourth includes differential racialization, in which the dominant society uses images and stereotypes of different minority groups that change throughout time in response to shifting needs (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

The next tenet is intersectionality and anti-essentialism, which highlights that no one person has a single identity but instead that we all carry many identities that overlap (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Lastly, is the tenet of a unique voice-of-color, known as the storytelling of racially minoritized writers and thinkers who experience different histories of oppression and are able to share with their White counterparts who may be very unaware of these experiences (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

CRT was extended by Gloria Ladson-Billings to examine race and racism in education. Ladson-Billings (1995) asserted three propositions: first that race is a significant factor in determining inequity, second that U.S. society is based on property rights and not human rights, and third that the intersection of race and property creates an analytical instrument in which we can understand social and school inequity. With this understanding, CRT in education scholars asserted that we must acknowledge the role that property plays in constituting the nation including the property rights that Whites carry in their own bodies (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

In CRT in education, race is both cultural representation and social structure (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Although scholars debate about whether class or race should be the center when discussing inequality, CRT in education scholars argue that African Americans regardless of social class position suffer individual, interpersonal, systemic and institutional racism (Ladson-Billings, 2021). With race as the determining factor in

inequity, class and gender are not enough to explain the variance in school experience and performance once race is the center of the discussion as Blackness matters. Moreover, when reviewing CRT, racism is not merely a series of isolated events but is more endemic psychologically and deeply ingrained in everyday life (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

In CRT in education, racism being endemic and deeply ingrained in everyday life also builds on the understanding that the democracy in the U.S. was built on capitalism and the lifeline of that capitalism was built on property rights (Ladson-Billings, 2021). These property rights are important as they were socially constructed and maintained white supremacy and dominance through slavery while allowing Whites access to resources in society. This continued for more than 200 years, which led to resistance during the civil rights movements. However, leaders during the civil rights movements fought for human rights and not property rights, and this ultimately left Blacks disadvantaged and deprived because of their race (Ladson-Billings, 2021).

Moreover, property specifically refers to education in both implicit and explicit ways, for example those with "better" properties who have higher tax assessments have access to better schools (Ladson-Billings, 2021). CRT in education scholars asserted that this also includes intellectual property such as the curriculum and offerings students have as well as physical property including access to science labs, computers, other state-of-the-art technology as well as certified teachers and instructors (Ladson-Billings, 2021). Despite attempts to mandate education standards, low-income and Black students do not have access to these properties in education, and this is where we can continue to identify social and educational inequities (Ladson-Billings, 2021). CRT in education explains that

race and racism have been built socially with inequities being reproduced in education. Although no longer overt, these inequities that are reproduced in color blindness, neutrality, and meritocracy are subtle, sustain racial tension in education environments, and foster environments where Blacks are subjected to racial microaggressions and race-related stress.

"CRT scholars in both the law and education believe that examining and exposing the ways that racialized inequity manifests and persists must inform social actions that can lead to social change" (Dixson, 2018, p. 233)

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are pertinent to this study as they are used throughout the research and are important in terms of framing and understanding the problem and purpose.

Emotional well-being is the intentional act of being aware of and attentive to one's feelings as a way to guide thoughts and actions (Goleman, 1995).

Health is the state of complete mental, physical, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (Larson, 1999, p. 126; WHO, 1958).

Micro-aggressor includes an individual who may commit a microaggression who may be unaware that they are participating in such communications (Sue et al., 2007).

Minoritize is the preferred term used to describe racial-ethnic groups rather than using minorities. Minority indicates less than and neglects the historical experiences of exclusion and oppressive systems people have faced systematically (Chase et al., 2014).

Physical well-being included areas such as nourishment, health care, shelter, mobility, and clothing (Grant et al., 2007).

Psychological well-being is the distinction between positive and negative affect and life satisfaction resulting in an excess of positive over negative feelings (Bradburn, 1969; Ryff, 1989).

Racial battle fatigue is the social-psychological stress response "to the distressing mental/emotional conditions that result from facing racism daily (e.g., frustration, anger, exhaustion, physical avoidance, psychological or emotional withdrawal, escapism, acceptance of racist attributions)" associated with being a person of color and the repeated target of racism (Smith, 2004, pg. 180).

Racial microaggressions include "brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile derogatory or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 1).

Racially minoritized student affairs professionals include Black, Latino, Asian American and Pacific Islander and Native American student affairs professionals with the understanding that minority status is socially constructed (Stewart, 2013).

Wellness is the sense of living that promotes the experience of balanced and consistent growth in the physical, social, and mental aspects of human existence (Adams, et al., 1997; Adams et al., 2010).

Whiteness is a form of belief, a system of assumptions and practices; it is not a description of a people: it is a socially constructed identity, usually based on skin color (Leonardo, 2002).

White dominant culture is comprised of the way in which Whites view themselves and how they define racial issues and define what is considered the standard in the U.S. racial and social order (Donae & Bonilla-Silva, 2013)

Woosah includes preserving and safeguarding your mindset and emotions… this includes knowing your worth, voice, and contributions while protecting your sense of peace (Shelton, 2019).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Early Defining of Microaggressions

Pierce (1970) asserted that racism in the U.S. is a public health and social justice issue as there is a false belief of innate inferiority of any person who has dark skin color, which encourages Whites to have attitudes of superiority, making the issue of racism pervasive. Pierce (1970) argued that through a litany of offensive mechanisms also known as micro aggressive statements, Whites consistently aimed to demean, subjugate, and humiliate Blacks, and if Blacks were to reject such mechanisms they were then seen as distasteful and unruly. It included five different offensive mechanisms: “we love you Blacks to death,” “you Blacks come see us,” “you Blacks are sick,” “we’re good to you Blacks,” and “we Whites are right.”

Pierce (1970) argued that these all stemmed from the need of Whites to reaffirm and reassert ideals of racial superiority or white supremacy. Pierce (1970) concluded by identifying these mechanisms are small, continuous bombardments of microaggressions by Whites that insidiously infiltrate race interactions and race relations. Following the civil rights movement, this discussion regarding the significance of race interactions and race relations continued to be prominent in American society and the context of higher education.

Critical Race Theory in Education Proposed

Ladson-Billings (1995) called for a theoretical perspective in education similar to that of the critical race theory, which was used in legal scholarship. The propositions included stated clearly that race was, and is still, significant in the United States. This

means the United States is based on property rights as opposed to human rights, which White people have privilege to different forms of property, and lastly when race and property rights meet at an intersection it becomes increasingly evident to identify the inequities that exist for Black people in U.S. society and schooling.

Ladson-Billings (1995) asserted that the statistical and demographic data show that race was indeed a significant factor in determining inequities in the U.S. Moreover, race had not been theorized, and it did not stand on its own from other notions such as class, ethnicity, and nation. Consequently, social-structural and cultural significance of race had not been used to analyze educational inequity (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings (1995) further asserted that although class and gender intersect race, individually they do not provide explanation for educational achievement differences between Whites and racially minoritized students. Furthermore, when examined, whether class and gender were combined or separate they did not account for the "extraordinarily high rates of school dropout, suspensions, expulsion, and failure" among racially minoritized males (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 51).

Using critical race theory, scholars expanded on legal scholarship and interpretations of rights to argue that the basis of U.S. society is founded and preserved through property rights (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Historically, in U.S. society Whites have been provided with higher levels of access and opportunity for property rights with an emphasis on educational property (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ultimately, Delgado and Stefancic (2017) suggested racially minoritized people name their own reality in legal discourse. Delgado and Stefancic (2017) asserted that reality is socially constructed and storytelling can be helpful in healing racial oppression while also potentially affecting the

oppressor. This is important as they may be naive to their wrongdoings as they have constructed their own narratives to maintain their privilege (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In academia, the use of critical race theory in education expanded the conceptualization of inequities in education with the emphasis on a society that has race as a social construct that provides privilege to one group and disadvantages other groups. While examining race and education, CRT in education examines kindergarten through 12th grade as well as higher education, and this is important as we examine nuances for higher education, students, faculty, and student affairs professionals.

Racial Climates on College Campuses

Hurtado et al. (1998) asserted that research regarding "campus racial climates can be used to enhance" educational practices and policy for attorneys, policy-makers and institutional leaders alike (p. 280). Furthermore, racial climates at institutions have remained devoid of policy initiatives amid evidence of discrimination and harassment on campuses with respect to college admission, policies, and programs (Hurtado, et al., 1998).

To understand campus racial climates, qualitative and quantitative researchers had begun examining how administrators, students, and faculty perceived racial and ethnic institutional climates, which included examining their attitudes and interactions with different racial and ethnic groups and their experiences with campus diversity (Hurtado et al., 1998). Hurtado et al. examined institution context through four dimensions. These dimensions include the institution's historical legacy of inclusion or exclusion or various racial groups, the structural diversity as it relates to representation of racial groups by number, "the psychological climate of perception and attitudes between and among

groups" as well as intergroup relations (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 282). Through this examination, colleges and universities were still being affected by their history of segregation, which could be identified by their policies that serve a homogeneous racial group as well as attitudes and behaviors that prevented desegregation in specific campus settings (Hurtado et al., 1998).

Although some institutions had histories of accepting and graduating more racially minoritized students, these students still were met by exclusionary practices and limited access while on campus (Hurtado, et al., 1998). When colleges and campuses refused to provide interaction and encouragement for their racially minoritized students after recruiting them, it provided more challenges for White students and Black students as it pertained to access to limited resources (Hurtado, et al., 1998). Furthermore, the psychological dimension of climate helped identify how students and faculty perceive their position and power within predominantly white institutions (Hurtado, 1998, p. 289). Moreover, this dimension included how racially minoritized faculty and students perceived institutional responses to racism, racial conflict, and discrimination as well as attitudes towards racially minoritized backgrounds different than one's own.

Hurtado et al. (1998) stated this psychological dimension is important as it helps understand how African American students perceived racial discrimination in their campus climate and how it had both a significant and negative effect on the students and their grades. In addition to negatively affecting the grades of racially minoritized students, discrimination on campus also provided greater psychological challenges such as social alienation even for students who persisted in spite of their perceived discrimination and alienation (Hurtado et al., 1998).

With the focus on campus racial climates developing, Solórzano et al. (2000) did a qualitative study on the African American college student experience while incorporating critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus climate. Racial microaggressions, although subtle or unconscious forms of racism, had a dramatic impact on African Americans and their day-to-day lives (Pierce, 1995; Solórzano et al., 2000). With race being a social construct that differentiates people, racism is defined as "a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress" racially minoritized people identifying three important points (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p.25). The three points include group superiority, the group that believes it is superior then has the agency to carry out racist behavior, and finally the understanding that racism can be used against multiple ethnic groups and races from the "superior" group (Pierce, 1995; Solórzano et al., 2000).

A Closer Examination of Race in Higher Education

The study identified that African American students in tense racial campus climates felt segregated from their peers and included faculty-to-student interactions being negative and instilling feelings of self-doubt (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In addition to feeling like the only minorities in their classrooms, these students shared that there was also in-class study isolation between them and their White peers enhanced by nonverbal microaggressions. The accumulation of these overt and subtle offenses in and outside of the classroom inevitably made it more difficult for these students to build defenses to stereotype threats and enhanced the perception of an overall negative campus racial climate (Solórzano et al., 2000). The feelings associated with these microaggressions were identified as "discouragement, frustration and exhaustion" which

ultimately made the students feel as if they could not perform well and opens the discussion for the proper consideration of race in higher education (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 69).

While diverse educational environments challenge the exploration of new ideas and arguments, debates regarding race-conscious admissions policies remain topics of debate in higher education (Rudenstine, 2001). Justice Lewis Powell shared that although distinctions in admissions are inherently suspect, it was permissible to explicitly take race into consideration as a factor in the university admissions decisions especially when the institution can show that the practice was needed to promote substantial interest (Rudenstine, 2001). These ideas regarding the consideration of race and diversifying student bodies across education were also shared regarding graduate programs, law schools, as well as medical programs (Rudenstine, 2001). Moreover, it is essential that the process of selection not only review merit, excellence in academics, and scores, but it should also include diversity while excluding quotas or set-asides (Rudenstine, 2001).

Microaggressions and the Negative Effect on Emotional and Psychological Well-Being

Despite the fact that there are strong assertions for the need of diversified higher education settings, Sellers and Shelton (2003) asserted that 59% of African American college students had once or twice been the target of racial insults. Moreover, social psychological research has identified both blatant and subtle forms of racial discrimination to have adverse consequences for mental health, which lead to deleterious mental health outcomes for racially minoritized individuals (Sellers et al., 2003; Sellers & Shelton, 2003).

In addition to poor mental health, the more likely someone perceived experiences with racial discrimination the more likely they are to report lower levels of happiness, life satisfaction, and intrusion or avoidance, which are known as higher psychiatric symptoms (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). These symptoms are also related to "symptoms of depression, anxiety, obsession-compulsion, and somatization among African Americans" (Sellers & Shelton, 2003, p. 1081).

Sellers and Shelton (2003) extended Branscombe et al.'s (1999) study by examining other dimensions of racial identity and how those dimensions protected racially minoritized individuals from adverse consequences associated with perceived racial discrimination. Study findings asserted that consequences of perceived discrimination resulted in more negative psychological outcomes with the relationship between perceived racial discrimination and "psychological distress being unidirectional" causing greater psychological distress (p. 1089).

Additionally, when examined, perceived racial discrimination was related to mental health via multiple pathways (Sellers & Shelton, 2003). Sellers and Shelton found that racial identity served as both a risk factor and a protective factor against racial discrimination on psychological distress.

Racial Discrimination and Psychological Distress

Sellers et al. (2003) asserted that racial discrimination may play a vital role in an indirect relationship between mental health and racial identity for African Americans. Research had also indicated that perceived stress could also be a way of viewing how racial discrimination impacts mental health and how one who views race as a central identity may experience more stress as well as depression and anxiety (Sellers et al., 2003).

In this longitudinal empirical study, Sellers et al. (2003) examined racial centrality as well as public regard with respect to participants' beliefs about other groups' negative attitudes. Sellers et al. (2003) found that strongly identifying with one's race could be beneficial to the health of young African Americans and included lower levels of psychological distress. Consequently, there was far less evidence of a relationship between one's public regard or beliefs of other groups' attitudes toward their racial group and their overall mental health (Sellers et al., 2003). Although the past studies have focused on students, studies began to examine campus racial climates and racially minoritized faculty in higher education as well.

Black Faculty Coping with Racial Battle Fatigue

Smith (2004) asserted that colleges and universities might be more hostile for Black students and faculty than in everyday larger society. Smith (2004) also argued that due to historical patterns of racial exclusion, Black faculty were entering hostile climates at colleges and universities. Additionally, due to White prejudices and systemic racism, there is an imbalance in U.S. higher education leading to the stereotyping of racially minoritized students and faculty (Smith, 2004).

Administrators in colleges and universities fail to identify and examine the psychological, physiological, and emotional stress experienced by African American faculty who are teaching predominately White students in diversity and inclusion classes (Smith, 2004). Smith (2004) argued that under such constraints, African American professors battle racial battle fatigue, which includes responding to mental and emotional conditions that result from encountering racism daily including racial slights, unfair treatments, recurrent indignities, and irritations.

Growing literature suggests that stress-related diseases result from racially minoritized individuals having to actively physiologically respond to chronic racial microaggressions (Smith, 2004; Solórzano et al., 2000). Racially minoritized professors have become prone to developing many different physiological symptoms in response to race-related stressors which can include encounters that throws the body out of balance (Sapolsky, 1998; Smith, 2004).

Moreover, when compared to their White counterparts, Black faculty report more exposure to stressors, which also increases their likelihood of both "resource strain-behavioral exhaustion and psychological and physiological distress" (Smith, 2004, p. 181). Furthermore, the perceptions a racially minoritized faculty member may have about conditions being stressful are more valuable in identifying stress responses than objective conditions viewed as less stressful by non-Blacks (Smith, 2004). While identifying racial battle fatigue, it is important to understand the racial slights, recurrent indignities, and irritations often referred to racial microaggressions and the role that they play in everyday interactions and campus settings.

Microaggressions Revisited

Sue et al. (2007) defined racial microaggressions as “brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile derogatory or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color” (p. 1). Those who commit microaggressions are oftentimes not aware of the communications and how they can be perceived when they interact with racial/ethnic minorities (Sue et al., 2007). Microaggressions have three different forms: microinsults, microinvalidations, and microassaults, and almost all interracial interactions are prone to microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007).

Microassaults are verbal or nonverbal explicit attacks, which are meant to hurt the intended individual and can include name-calling, purposeful discriminatory acts, and avoidant behavior (Sue et al., 2007). These acts are examples of what would be referred to as “old fashioned” racism on the individual level and are deliberate by the microaggressor in a limited situation. These microaggressors typically hold notions of minority inferior privately and express or display these notions publicly when they feel safe or lose control (Sue et al., 2007).

Microinsults communicate insensitivity or rudeness and demean a racially minoritized individual’s racial identity or heritage. These also include subtle snubs that may be unknown to the microaggressor that clearly communicate a hidden message that is insulting to the racially minoritized individual. Although these statements are not aggressive, it is important to note that the content of the situation matters and directly impacts the experience of the individual.

Furthermore, avoidance or conveying that the contributions of a racially minoritized individual are unimportant is another example of a microinsult. Lastly, microinvalidations are communications that deliberately negate, exclude, or nullify the psychological feelings, thoughts, or reality of a racially minoritized person (Sue et al., 2007). An example of a microinvalidation includes when a Black person is told that "I don't see color" or "we are all human beings" as the effect is to negate their experiences as racial and cultural human begins (Sue et al., 2007). These forms are all important as microaggressions create psychological dilemmas that when left unresolved lead to racial anger and even loss of self-esteem for racially minoritized individuals.

Constantine and Sue (2007) found considerable evidence that White Americans are socialized to internalize stereotypes, and with racism being deeply embedded in the country, racist behaviors and acts are explicitly and implicitly formed towards Black people in this country via covert and overt ways on a daily basis. Within the helping profession of counseling, unconscious racism can occur leading to detrimental impact from White supervisors to their clients and within supervisory relationships in office, which lead to the study of Black trainees' perceptions of racial microaggressions (Constantine & Sue, 2007).

Constantine and Sue (2007) asserted that many well-intentioned and liberal White Americans have unconscious negative racial feelings and attitudes towards racially minoritized individuals (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Dovidio et al., 2002; Jones, 1997). In their study, Constantine and Sue found that many Black supervisees experienced high levels of microinvalidations with White supervisors, which unknowingly created an impasse in the relationship. Additionally, one of the ethical implications found included

clients of color being underserved due to the lack of integration of racial considerations in training for supervisees causing greater health inequities for racially minoritized individuals (Constantine & Sue, 2007). This is another form of how contemporary racism is expressed and can result in the harm and disadvantage to the targeted person or group (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Dovidio et al., 2002; Jones, 1997).

Additionally, educational, social, and professional environments in society at-large must realize there is a physiological and psychological cost of gendered racism, and those experiences shape the psychological and physiological well-being of racially minoritized individuals (Pierce, 1970; Smith et al., 2011). In their study, Smith et al. (2011) examined the role societal problems, racial microaggressions, and educational attainment have on mundane, extreme, environmental stress (MEES) for Black males.

Their findings identified that racial microaggressions significantly increased MEES for Black males with higher educational attainment along with societal problems increasing MEES across educational levels (Smith et al., 2011). Smith et al. (2011) asserted that interventions should be developed in education and work settings, as misandry for Black males in society is directly related to public health threats for Black men with both low and high levels of educational attainment. These assertions also remained true for individuals of other racially minoritized groups such as Asian American and Latina/o students.

Racial Microaggressions, Racial Battle Fatigue, and Environmental Stress for Latino/as

For Latina/o college students their experience with racial microaggressions and hostile campus environments also result in perceived experiences, which result in psychological, physiological, and behavioral stress (Smith et al., 2011). These perceived experiences with discrimination have been connected in scholarship to Latina/o students questioning their sense of belonging at their colleges and universities as well as their self-concept of their academic capabilities (Hurtado et al., 1998; Smith et al., 2011). Through the field of education, sociology, and health psychology, the RBF framework was created. The RBF framework investigates the psychological, behavioral, and physiological stress of racially minoritized people and was provided to develop an understanding of the health consequences associated with continued racial stress and racial microaggressions (Pierce, 1970, 1995; Smith, 2004, 2009a, 2009b; Smith et al., 2011).

There has been a dearth of higher education scholarship that provides a linkage between physical, behavioral, and psychological health outcomes and campus racial climates, which resulted in this quantitative study by Smith, Hung, and Franklin (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Within the RBF framework, psychological responses include areas such as frustration and anger, while behavioral responses examine stereotype threat and poor school performance, and physiological responses include headaches or high blood pressure (Smith, 2004, 2009a, 2009b; Smith et al., 2011).

With RBF serving as the framework to understanding health outcomes, it is important to note that "racial microaggressions are the individual discriminatory and

racist interactions" racially minoritized people experience daily (Smith et al., 2011, p. 307). Smith et al. (2011) suggested that psychological stress responses for racially minoritized students were most impacted by racial microaggressions in the RBF framework as well as physiological and behavioral stress responses.

The findings illustrate how society reinforces systems that provide White people with greater access to better quality education, jobs, and health services (Smith et al., 2011; Savas, 2014). Smith et al. (2011) asserted that future studies should include physiological and behavioral stress responses for racially minoritized students as research has typically focused on academic factors and many different psychological factors. Furthermore, their findings illustrate that among the four RBF domains presented by Smith (2009a, 2009b) there is a relationship, and the RBF model provides an additional way to investigate damaging effects of racism for Latino/as and racially minoritized individuals (Smith et al., 2011).

Critical Race Theory as a Framework

Although it is certain that there are damaging effects of racism, there is no single theory of race and race relations in literature (Savas, 2014). With the U.S. society being racialized and having economic, political, social, and ideological levels partially structured by racial categories or races, white supremacy has very important consequences for racial inequality, which has led to the development of a jurisprudence that accounts for the role of racism in U.S. law (Savas, 2014). Bell (1992) as a leading scholar in CRT, was concerned with "inescapable and inherent racist in the American legal system, as well as the consistent application of racial subordination and discrimination in the practice of law" (Savas, 2014, p. 507).

Moreover, CRT goes beyond examining racial discrimination, inequality, and racism on an individual level and asserts that racism is within the legal as well as social structure of U.S. society (Savas, 2014). The five tenets of CRT in education identified by Solórzano and Yosso include inter-centricity of race and racism, challenge to dominant ideology, commitment to social justice, centrality of experimental knowledge, and a transdisciplinary perspective (Savas, 2014). CRT stories center the resistance and counter-stories of racially minoritized individuals including their experiences and important social events to push deficit lenses and dominant, oppressive forms of whiteness (Bonilla-Silva, 2007; Solórzano & Perez Huber, 2020). This is important as these vital elements provide the social reality and encapsulation of oppression, racism, discrimination, and victimization to scholars and sociologists who examined racism via CRT (Savas, 2014). Savas (2014) asserted that it is important for racially minoritized students entering college to come from racially segregated backgrounds while addressing how administrators and campuses should provide support to students without addressing the challenges, supports, or consequences for racially minoritized faculty or administrators (Savas, 2014).

Racial Battle Fatigue, Stressors, and Black Faculty

The historic exclusion of racially minoritized faculty from academia inherently creates a dilemma for those who have historically held positions of power as racially minoritized faculty increase with organizational diversity (Arnold et al., 2016). Challenges such as inadequate support, tokenization, as well as salary disparities in White faculty are ever present for racially minoritized faculty (Arnold et al., 2016). Due to the slow rate at which Black advancement through faculty ranks occurs and the stagnation of

tenure and promotion to full professor, racially minoritized faculty may feel stigmatized or out of place in academia (Arnold et al., 2016). With exacerbated diversity efforts and racially minoritized faculty still being treated in stereotypical and racist ways, an examination of their experiences occurred (Arnold et al., 2016; Patton, 2016).

Arnold et al., (2016) examined the "psychological, physiological and emotional/behavioral effects of racial microaggressions on Black faculty who are going through the promotion and tenure (P&T) process," which can lead to experiencing RBF (p. 892). For the study, Arnold et al., (2016) defined RBF as the "social-psychological stress responses associated with being a "racially minoritized person and being a repeated target of racism" (p. 892). Black faculty shared that the P&T process was embedded with inequalities that "increased their exposure to racial microaggressions and thus RBF" (Arnold et al., 2016).

Further, racially minoritized faculty often have to exhibit coping mechanisms to deal with the persistent racial microaggressions and RBF (Arnold et al., 2016). Moreover, Arnold et al., (2016) asserted that although these racially minoritized faculty members were still able to achieve through RBF at a high rate, they did it to the detriment of their health, which still declined, and this phenomenon is known as "John Henryism." Ameliorating racial discrimination in academia and its practices requires commitments from institutions as well as the all-encompassing collective of postsecondary institutions. Arnold et al., (2016) asserted that this includes but is not limited to policy changes, the creation of equitable spaces, as well as identifying and acknowledging how RBF can be pervasive on college campuses and communities in a manner that exposes how academic practices exacerbate very real dangers. Pressing forward, racially minoritized faculty

serve students in the classroom while racially minoritized student affairs professionals serve students in a unique and different capacity outside of the classroom.

Black Lives Matter and Student Affairs Professionals

Husband (2016) asserted that in addition to having problematic racial climates, predominately white institutions are also environments in which racially minoritized student affairs professionals have to navigate blocked professional opportunities while combating racism in various levels of environmental stress. With the rise of social media and hashtags like #BlackLivesMatter, #ICantBreathe, and #WeAreTrayvonMartin, the murders of young Black bodies and activism on college campuses and universities has magnified racial campus climates (Husband, 2016). On these campuses, Black student affairs professionals are serving racially minoritized students who are also experiencing racial discrimination and racial microaggressions, and this responsibility in addition their professional demands lead to RBF.

Husband (2016) defined RBF as "results from constant physiological, cultural and emotional coping with racial microaggressions" in unsupportive or racially hostile environments (p. 95). Within their helping roles on campuses, racially minoritized student affairs professionals are losing the capacity to focus on student needs as they navigate experiences of RBF and racial microaggressions (Husband, 2016). Due to the breadth and depth of student affairs professional work, which includes after-business-hours and weekend commitments, many racially minoritized student affairs professionals may experience burnout and exhaustion as they disregard self-care needs (Husband, 2016).

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Legislation and RMSAPs

Although social justice efforts and DEI were on the rise following the murder of George Floyd during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court decision in 2023 to no longer consider race in college admissions ignited a war on DEI and strengthened the war on CRT (Malcom, 2024). This inherently has prompted institutions and organizations to respond in a manner that predetermines how laws will change and they, in turn, adjust (Miller et al., 2023).

Miller et al. (2023) stated that the bills generated to ban CRT in K–12 settings also directly impact higher education. There has been a gross mischaracterization of CRT, and those who opposed it argued that it promotes anti-white racism and threatens the current institution of education (Miller et al., 2023). In their fight against CRT and DEI, states such as Georgia and Florida are currently weakening academic freedom and funding sources (Miller et al., 2023).

This war has included banning DEI training, prohibiting public colleges from having DEI offices, and completely dismantling initiatives and efforts that center CRT (Malcom, 2024). Those in opposition of DEI initiatives and CRT have asserted that these offices, trainings, and practices are misusing funds and are discriminatory (Malcom, 2024). This and other race-related stressors have directly impacted RMSAPs and specifically those who identify as women.

Dr. Antoinette Candia-Bailey, Vice President of Student Affairs at Lincoln University "who died by suicide after filing complaints of workplace hostility" asserted in her dissertation about the challenges RMSAPs women experience (Larde, 2024, p. 5). She stated that "African-American women who seek senior-level positions should be

aware of potential existence of sociocultural factors that may hinder them from upward mobility" ultimately raising awareness about the race-related challenges faced by RMSAPs leaders with an emphasis on women in the workplace (Larde, 2024, p.5). The events leading to her suicide included challenges with her supervisor and race-related challenges Black women leaders face in higher education and other career fields (Larde, 2024). With the current landscape and RMSAPs, especially women, navigating complex campus environments, the physiological, psychological, and emotional well-being of RMSAPs needs to researched and examined through a critical lens that explores experiences as well as opportunities that open pathways to healing and wellness.

Health and Well-Being

Understanding the definitions and models surrounding health and well-being in higher education will provide context as to how racism and racial microaggressions are harmful to racially minoritized student affairs professionals. This will also help with understanding why this is a public health and social justice issue in higher education. Additionally, wellness has been coined as a passive term that is essentially associated with diet, sleep, exercise, and disease prevention (Rowan, n.d.). Well-being is a state that is more comprehensive and associated with health, happiness, and life satisfaction while constantly balancing the different dimensions, which include physical, emotional, social, financial, purpose, and community (Rowan, n.d.).

I explored how racial battle fatigue affects the health of racially minoritized student affairs professionals at predominately white institutions. In K–12 education and higher education, there has been newer literature on racial battle fatigue, racial microaggressions, and racialized stress (Smith, 2004, 2009a, 2009b; Solórzano & Yosso,

2002; Solórzano et al., 2000; Truong & Museus, 2012). According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 1958) "health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (p.459). Consistent with this definition of health, emergent literature compared with the extensive literature in health and social psychology has studied the connection between racial discrimination and the dimensions of health for racially minoritized people (Soto et al., 2011).

Psychological Well-Being

This study specifically aimed to explore how racially minoritized student affairs professionals respond to forms of discrimination such as racism and racial microaggressions, which have been linked directly and indirectly to diminished mental and physical health (Hatzenbuehler et al., 2013; Mohatt et al., 2014). In the early conversation regarding health, one's psychological or mental well-being was conceptualized as how the individual distinguishes between positive and negative affect (Bradburn, 1969; Koydemir et al., 2021). Bradburn (1969) identified this as important to one's overall health as the factors in one's life contribute to outcomes for life satisfaction and whether or not the individual experiences more positive than negative feelings resulting in other life choices and decisions (Bradburn, 1969; Koydemir et al., 2021).

Early conceptualizations, specifically focused on psychological tradition, with pleasant emotional experiences as a fundamental dimension of employee well-being were described in academic research as psychological well-being or subjective well-being (Andrews & Withey, 2012; Bradburn, 1969; Campbell, 1981; Diener, 1984; Ho, & Kuvaas; 2020; Wright et al., 2007). In accordance with this view, psychological well-being occurs when an individual has frequent positive emotions and infrequent negative

emotions (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011; Ho & Kuvaas; 2020). Later research has expanded on the dimensions of psychological well-being including areas such as social relations, health, and self-validation (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Ho & Kuvaas; 2020; Keyes, 1998; Larson; 1996; Wart, 2011).

Organizational research has identified that there is an effect on the individual while they are in the workplace due to individuals spending on average one third of their waking hours on the job and not completely leaving work at the office when they leave their work site (Danna & Griffin, 1999). Consequently, the stress of everyday life added to work-related stress can lead to detrimental emotional and physical outcomes due to the extreme demands placed on the human body (Danna & Griffin, 1999). According to Danna and Griffin, "Physical/physiological indicators include but are not limited to blood pressure, heart condition, and general physical health" (p. 359).

Danna and Griffin (1999) asserted that organizational research has centered two salient person-related concepts of health and well-being. The first referred to mental health, which included concepts such as mental, psychological, or emotional aspects indicated by emotional states and epidemiological rates of disease and mental illness (Danna & Griffin, 1999). The second focused on physical health and was defined by physical symptomatology and epidemiological rates of physical illness and diseases (Danna & Griffin, 1999).

Physical Well-Being

Grant et al. (2007) identified different categories with both psychological and physical dimensions of well-being. Psychological well-being included an individual's satisfaction, agency, self-respect, and capabilities (Grant et al., 2007). Physical well-

being also included areas such as nourishment, health care, shelter, mobility, and clothing (Grant et al., 2007). Ultimately the psychological approach included two fields of study. The first defined well-being through subjective experience of pleasure or the balance between positive and negative feelings and thoughts in judgment and function, while the second included fulfillment and the realization of human potential (Grant et al., 2007).

Physical well-being has been studied in the social and natural sciences including subjective experiences on bodily health (Grant et al., 2007). With physical well-being focusing on bodily health and function, researchers have primarily studied the connection between work and employee physical health in three ways (Grant et al., 2007). The three ways included work being a potential source of disease or injury, the second included work potentially becoming a source of stress, and finally, work being a source of benefits that allow for the purchase of healthcare services in areas that do not otherwise provide universal healthcare (Danna & Griffin, 1999; Grant et al., 2007).

Burke et al. (2016) found that student affairs professionals are subjected to conflicting demands, work long hours, and are physically and emotionally exhausted by the end of any semester and academic year. Furthermore, meeting these demands, expectations, and circumstances means that student affairs professionals often suffer the consequences of poor work–life balance, which occurs when the individual devotes more energy in one area while neglecting other areas (Burke et al., 2016). Ultimately, organizational research has found that employee mental and physical health plays a large role in organizational growth, while the organization plays a role in the individuals' mental and physical health. Furthermore, when the employees are racially minoritized student affairs professionals, aspects of racism in the

organization play a significant role in the psychological and physical well-being of those individuals (Burke et al., 2016).

Self-Care, Racial Battle Fatigue, and Student Affairs Professionals

Identifying and practicing self-care for racially minoritized student affairs professionals is only a part of the process in ameliorating RBF (Husband, 2016; Quaye et al., 2019). Quaye et al. identified that although being resilient and engaging in resistance is important, Black student affairs professionals have to navigate a helping profession in which they are expected to prioritize students' well-being above their own. Quaye et al. asserted that Black student affairs professionals are experiencing racism while working with students who are also navigating racism themselves, and hearing their stories with respect to how they navigate this tension is important for researchers and educators who support Black and racially minoritized student affairs professionals.

Quaye et al. (2019) asserted that there is emotional labor, which is an added layer of management that keeps racially minoritized individuals from devoting the time and energy towards the needed self-care that allows them to "preserve their dignity in historical white spaces" (p. 98). This emotional labor coupled with racial battle fatigue in environments that have been racially structured historically can lead to some of the aforementioned health implications such as higher blood pressure and anxiety (Husband, 2016; Smith 2009a, 2009b; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2011; Quaye et al., 2019).

The findings from their study identified self-care as a temporary fix to larger structural racism that provided participants with what they needed to cope (Quaye et al., 2019). The findings also identified five different ways in which racially minoritized student affairs professionals prioritized self-care. These included "unplugging or

disconnection from the things that made the person fatigued, finding and building community, caring for one's body, finding safe space and using counseling" (Quaye et al., 2019, p. 111).

Further, an important finding was that the racially minoritized women participants participated in self-care more than men, and it did not come with the notion that they were selfish or the perception of it being impossible. Although these findings are important, Quaye et al., (2019) asserted that these coping mechanisms should not welcome acceptance of systemic racism and that it is still extremely taxing for racially minoritized people to manage their race-related stress and racial microaggressions repeatedly.

The student affairs professional role requires "daily and constant interaction with people from all walks of life, backgrounds, and life experiences" and each of these individuals possess their own unique expectations related to their individual role at colleges and universities (Miller, 2016, p. 139). For higher education and student affairs professionals, these requirements of their role make "finding balance and engaging in self-care a necessity" (Miller, 2016, p. 139). Moreover "student affairs, as a helping profession, often attracts people who are committed to prioritizing students' needs over their own" (Quaye et al., 2019, p. 101). Recent research has focused specifically on student affairs professionals and the requirements of their roles "given the time they invest in working with college students" coupled with "how they often prioritize students' needs over their own care" (Quaye et al., 2019, p. 96)

Chapter 3

Methodology

Postsecondary institutions have policies, procedures, and practices historically rooted in whiteness (Hurtado, 1992; Husband, 2016; Pierce, 1970). Although there has been an increase in diversity efforts on campuses, racial microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue continue to be studied due to the emotional, psychological, and physiological consequences on racially minoritized students and faculty (Arnold et al., 2016; Patton, 2016). This leaves a dearth of research on racially minoritized student affairs professionals who have had their health impacted by racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue experienced while serving at predominantly white institutions. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore racial battle fatigue on the health of racially minoritized student affairs professionals at predominately white institutions.

Due to racial microaggressions being "brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile derogatory or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color," they are by definition subtle (Sue et al., 2007, p. 1). Furthermore, those who commit microaggressions are oftentimes not aware of how they can be perceived when they interact with racial/ethnic minorities (Sue et al., 2007).

White Americans internalize stereotypes, and with racism being deeply embedded in the country, racist behaviors and acts are constantly and implicitly formed towards racially minoritized people in the U.S. in both covert and overt ways (Constantine & Sue, 2007). Within helping professions, unconscious racism can occur leading to detrimental impact from White Americans to racialized minorities, which lead to the constant

perceived racial microaggressions in professional and personal settings (Constantine & Sue, 2007). Constantine and Sue asserted that many well-intentioned and liberal White Americans have unconscious negative racial feelings and attitudes towards racially minoritized individuals (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Dovidio et al., 2002; Jones, 1997). This is another example of how contemporary racism is expressed and can result in the harm and discrimination of racially minoritized populations (Constantine & Sue, 2007; Dovidio et al., 2002; Jones, 1997; Sue et al., 2009).

As a result, in educational research there has been an examination of the perceived experiences of racially minoritized students and faculty with racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue; however, very little research has been conducted on the student affairs professional populations.

Research Questions

The important questions and subquestion to guide the study include:

1. How do racially minoritized student affairs professionals describe how they respond to racial microaggressions?
2. How do racially minoritized student affairs professionals describe how they respond to racial battle fatigue?
3. How do racially minoritized student affairs professionals who experience racial battle fatigue respond to the psychological, physiological, and emotional/behavioral aspects of their health?

Research Design: Qualitative Research

To better understand how racially minoritized student affairs professionals at a PWI respond to racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue, I conducted a qualitative research study. Within research design, quantitative research and qualitative research have different strengths and answer different questions (Maxwell, 2012). For example, a qualitative design is not fixed and requires a "do-it-yourself" process as it needs continuous interaction along the design components (Maxwell, 2012, pg. 19). Qualitative research has a process orientation that includes focusing on people, situations, events, and explanation is based on the analysis of how an event can connect to another (Maxwell, 2012).

Allan and Eatough (2016) asserted that qualitative research integrates the subjective and intersubjective while researching experiences and having the potential to increase depth and complexity to the research. Additionally, qualitative methods allow the researcher to further explore subtle differences in relationships while also exploring challenges and the depth of an issue for specific groups of people (Allan & Eatough, 2016). In such, qualitative research should be a process that is reflexive through each stage of the project, and it should also require that researchers engage in the process in a way that is authentic and open (Attia & Edge, 2017; Maxwell, 2012). The reflexive researcher also participates in prospective reflexivity, which requires identifying how one manages their researcher status (Attia & Edge, 2017).

Reflexivity includes the examination of past experiences and how past experiences have shaped interpretations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Reflexivity can be captured through notes during the research process, which are also identified as memos

(Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Intentionally defined research encourages and develops inquiry with researchers and people as opposed to research on people (Altrichter et al., 2002). Qualitative research uses a system of procedures that includes collecting evidence and producing findings while seeking to answer a broader question in relation to the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis study was to explore how racially minoritized student affairs professionals experience racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue at PWIs and the impact it has on their health. Furthermore, I intended to understand how participants who experience racial battle fatigue manage aspects of their health as there is a lack of literature examining the phenomenon This type of research methodology was selected as I intended to listen to and capture rich and meaningful experiences had by each individual participant by using phenomenology as a strategy of inquiry (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

The use of an established paradigm such as phenomenology provides the researcher with a developed and coherent approach to research as opposed to having to construct the approach from scratch (Maxwell, 2012). Phenomenology notably focuses on the essence of the lived experiences of a particular group of people (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). "Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 55). Furthermore, those participating in phenomenological research have the assumption that through dialogue and reflection

there will also be a revealing of the meaning of the lived experience (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Through interviewing, phenomenology elicits people's life stories and assumes that shared experiences have essence (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Theoretical Foundations of IPA

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) originated in psychology and has since been adopted throughout a wide array of disciplines with health sciences being the most notable (Oxley, 2016). IPA's starting point was in a paper by Jonathan Smith (1996), and it had two broad categories including transcendental phenomenology by Edmund Husserl and hermeneutic phenomenology by Martin Heidegger (Finlay, 2011; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Tuffour, 2017). IPA is a hermeneutic version of phenomenology that has both a structured approach with qualitative orientation (Finlay, 2011; Tuffour, 2017). IPA is situated in qualitative research due to experiences not being easily translated via quantifiable data, which would cause loss in data translation (Oxley, 2016). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) asserted that IPA actually merges ideas from Husserl and Heidegger, identifying that the method is both descriptive as well as interpretative.

There are three main theoretical underpinnings to IPA methodology: phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography (Finlay, 2011; Oxley, 2016). Phenomenology refers to a range of research methods as well as a philosophical movement that was first developed in the early 20th century by Husserl (Finlay, 2011; Oxley, 2016; Tuffour, 2017). Phenomenology invites the researcher to slow down and focus with the phenomenon while asking the participant about how their world is lived

and their experience (Finlay, 2011). With focus on the philosophical study of "being," Husserl placed great emphasis on dealing with the phenomena and developed a series of steps (Oxley, 2016).

These steps are known as reductions and "include 'bracketing' preconceptions and pre-existing knowledge," which allow the researchers to get to the very essence of a phenomenon (Gil-Rodriguez & Hefferon, 2015; Oxley, 2016, p. 56). Additionally, IPA is separate from other hermeneutic approaches as it follows the individual and prioritizes participants' sense making (Finlay, 2011). During an interview the researcher's questions focus on being exploratory, sense making, are open-ended and prioritize process as opposed to outcomes (Finlay, 2011). Hermeneutics shifted from description to interpretation of a phenomenon (Oxley, 2016). This interpretation places emphasis on the present and identifies the researcher's worldview as inseparable from the way in which the researcher interprets the participant's experiences (Oxley, 2016).

Furthermore, idiography refers to an in-depth analysis of individual cases and examines single perspectives of participants in their contexts (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Tuffour (2017) indicated that IPA is a systematic analysis of consciousness. As a systematic analysis of consciousness, IPA researchers are to take active steps while giving voice to the participants and their experiences. This is followed by in-depth interpretation of the participants' narratives (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Tuffour, 2017). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) asserted that IPA research studies focus on how participants talk about events and objects as opposed to describing phenomena according to a predetermined categorical system. This process requires the researcher to participate

in “bracketing” their assumptions and allowing the participant to make meaning of the phenomena themselves (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Phenomenological interviews have been categorized to fulfill two primary purposes including providing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon as well as serving as a vehicle that develops the relationship to understanding the meaning of their lived experience (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). For these interviews to indeed be successful, the researcher has to identify participants who have experienced and are willing to discuss the lived experience under examination with the researcher (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Such phenomenological research allows the researcher to build the essence of the participants’ experiences; this provides an opportunity to create a rich description of a central phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) explores how participants make sense of their personal and social worlds in detail (Smith & Osborn, 2009). IPA studies focus on the “perceptions and understandings” of a small particular group as opposed to making more general claims based on large sample size (Smith & Osborn, 2009). This approach is phenomenological as it is a greater examination including the participants’ life and is focused on the participant’s personal perception of an event or object in which the researcher plays a significant role as the research exercise is a very dynamic process (Smith & Osborn, 2009).

With IPA being a very dynamic process that provides a detailed examination of the participants’ lives, it supplies the participants within the study an opportunity to add voice to their personal and social experiences. This also highlighted participants’

narratives with racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue (RBF), which is also a central tenet of critical race theory (CRT). This design has strong philosophical underpinnings and typically involves conducting interviews (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). With researchers focusing on the detailed perceptions and meaning-making process of participants, semi-structured interviews have been recommended as the most flexible data collection instrument for completing the analysis (Smith & Osbourne, 2009).

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allow engagement where questions can be modified in the midst of participants' responses prompting the researcher to ask intently about interesting and important areas and events that surface in the participants' recollection (Smith & Osborn, 2009). As a result, the advantages of semi-structured interviews provide the researcher with an adequate environment to foster rapport while allowing for richer data to be produced (Smith & Osborn, 2009). Conversely, semi-structured interviews also take longer and are oftentimes more difficult to analyze (Smith & Osborn, 2009.

Phenomenological research can provide a general description or idiographic analysis. The general description provides insight as to "to what extent the phenomenology practiced aims to describe the experience in general, or is it instead focused on explication of individual experience?" (Finlay, 2009, p. 9). In this method, the recommendation included recruiting at least three participants as it would make it easier to identify the more general experience of the phenomenon apart from the individual experience (Finlay; 2009; Giorgi, 2009). In contrast, the idiographic method focuses on understanding the individual, which oftentimes may or may not provide general insights;

however, idiographic research can also be interpretative in identifying general structures of an experience (Finlay, 2009).

Phenomenological research involves the rich description of the lived experience or worldview and requires that the researcher also set aside judgments about the happenings of the phenomenon with an open phenomenological attitude (Finlay, 2009). Using phenomenological research alongside CRT in this study is important as a tenet of CRT involves a “unique voice of color” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 11). This unique voice of color is also referred to as storytelling of racially minoritized individuals who experience different histories of unjust treatment and discrimination. This form of storytelling allows the racially minoritized to share with their White counterparts who may be very unaware of their different histories and experiences with oppression, as minoritized status is accompanied by “presumed competence to speak about race and racism” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 11).

Interpretative phenomenology, which emerged from the work of hermeneutic philosophers asserts an “inevitable and basic structure of our being in the world” (Finlay, 2009. p. 11). Thus “researcher subjectivity is inevitably implicated” in the process and requires a phenomenological attitude of openness (Finlay, 2009, p. 12). This arguably is accomplished through shifting back and forth, which includes bracketing assumptions and making use of them reflexively (Finlay, 2009). Bracketing is not merely an initial first step where bias is acknowledged, but it requires refraining from positioning oneself together allowing the researcher to review the data with relative openness (Finlay, 2009; Giorgi, 2009). This openness requires the researcher to see the experience differently which is essential to the interpretative phenomenological process.

Bracketing in Phenomenology Research

Bracketing mitigates the potential for unexamined preconceptions connected to the research (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Bracketing is important for many reasons, one of which includes demonstrating validity of the data collection (Chan et al., 2013). While studying the phenomenon, bracketing encompasses the presuppositions, assumptions, biases, and emotions of the researcher (Tufford & Newman, 2012). This operation involves excluding our own ways of perceiving the world (Finlay, 2011).

During the operation of bracketing, there should be deep thought and critical concentration where the phenomenon is viewed with curiosity (Finlay, 2011). Moustakas (1994) asserted that bracketing is important as it assists with methodically connecting the study design to the research questions. Tufford and Newman (2012) identified that bracketing greatly enriches data collection interpretation when the "researcher as instrument," upkeeps self-awareness as an ongoing process. The researcher during this operation is to directly connect with the world instead of thinking about it in a way that temporarily suspends to see the world anew (Finlay, 2011). During the interview, the researcher should also assume that the participant will bring their preconceptions towards the phenomenon while the interview is being conducted (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

In phenomenology research, different methods of bracketing exist including writing memos, being fully present, aware, and suspending biases during interviews as well as reflexive journaling. Incorporating different methods of bracketing that allow the researcher to reflect on their engagement, be fully present, and journal about their reflexive and neutral stance provides the researcher with clarity and intentionally increases engagement with the participants and during data collection and analysis.

(Paterson & Groening, 1996). The timing of bracketing does not happen only at one stage within the process as it should be observed during the entire research process as a source of insight and a way to identify obstacles to engagement for the researcher (Ahern, 1999; Charmaz, 2006; Rolls & Relf, 2006; Tufford & Newman, 2012).

As researchers have a close relationship with the research study, the process of reviewing and monitoring materials or data can be extremely ethically and emotionally challenging, and bracketing can also assist in protecting the researcher during the process (Rolls & Relf, 2006; Tufford & Newman, 2012). Bracketing can increase objectivity for the researcher in a way that uncovers forgotten experiences while also providing the opportunity to amplify the reflexive capacity of the researcher (Rolls & Relf, 2006). Bracketing will allow me as the researcher to maintain the tension of the dialectic process while helping the researcher make sense of the data and analyze the process (Tufford & Newman, 2012).

Positionality

Identifying my beliefs and assumptions allows me as the researcher to intentionally learn about racially minoritized student affairs professionals. As a racially minoritized student affairs professional, there were times in which I had to respond to racial microaggressions and experienced racial battle fatigue as a result of my work, serving students and providing support for my colleagues. I entered the field as a full-time profession in July of 2015 when I started my career as a resident director at a small-sized public historically Black institution. From that position, I transitioned to a predominately white institution in the same functional area of residential learning and university housing for about 2 years. In that role, I developed as a professional and then

identified an opportunity to begin working as assistant director and counselor of a persistence and retention program with racially minoritized students. After working with the community of racially minoritized students for 4 years, I transitioned to an advisory role that did not focus specifically on serving those who identify as historically underrepresented.

Learning about the experiences of others will include aspects of their professional journeys and growth, challenges they have experienced, and the ways in which they make meaning of those experiences and how they frame their responses to what they perceived occurred to them on a predominantly white campus whether they were working with a colleague or assisting a racially minoritized student. I hope to speak with racially minoritized student affairs professionals from different functional areas with different levels of professionalism and expertise in hopes of learning about their experiences with the phenomenon as they frame it.

It is important to note paradigms and theories allow the researcher to frame inquiry and the methodological lens as they conduct their study (Mertens, 20023). As a researcher, I have an epistemological stance that frames analysis from a critical constructivist lens (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). As a researcher using a constructivist paradigm, Mertens (2023) asserted that the use of qualitative approaches assists with framing inquiry in a way that aligns with critical realism. Through this lens, “critical realists (CR) understand that knowledge is constructed socially and that their own knowledge is within itself independent based on constructs” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Mertens, 2023).

Within constructivism, knowledge is socially constructed; however, critical realists identify that their knowledge sits independently of perceptions and constructs (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). My experiences as a Black student affairs professional has created preconceptions and beliefs about student affairs professionals who identify as racially minoritized. Creswell and Creswell (2018) asserted that the constructivist paradigm is for those who seek to further understand the world and the reconstructions of the world as well. I am situated in the research as I have worked with racially minoritized student affairs professionals at predominately white institutions.

An assumption that I have is that although many racially minoritized student affairs professionals may experience racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue, they may not respond to it at all, as they see white supremacy and racism as a normal occurrence. This relates to my second assumption, which is that some racially minoritized student affairs professionals have become desensitized to race-related stress or racial microaggressions. This could be due to lack of identifying and acknowledging when the indignities happen, or it could also be connected to the minoritized staff member not wanting to cause disruption in the workplace, which could lead to them being outcasted or unemployed.

Conversely, other assumptions that I have included many racially minoritized student affairs professionals following COVID-19, the social injustices, and protests that were televised nationally are experiencing burnout as the psychological and physiological stressors attribute to RBF at a higher rate. Another belief and assumption that I possess about racially minoritized student affairs professionals is that they take on an extra responsibility of care while serving racially minoritized students. This relates to another

assumption that this added responsibility adds to the psychological, emotional, and physical responses that racially minoritized student affairs professionals experience due to the nature of their work. However, that may not always be the case. Lastly, I assume that racially minoritized student affairs professionals develop community with other racially minoritized student affairs professionals at a lower rate than they do with their White counterparts as they may have experienced high instances of racial microaggressions in daily situations.

Research Site

I conducted this phenomenological study at the Modern University, a PWI four-year Carnegie-classified public research institution located in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The student population includes approximately 20,000 with 14,000 undergraduates, 3,000 graduates, and 2,000 professional students. The university currently has about 10 colleges and 10 schools while offering 100 bachelor's degrees, 50 master's degrees, 15 doctoral degrees, and 2 professional degrees.

Approximately 36% of the student body is from underrepresented groups with 402 identifying as international students. In the fall of 2022 enrollment by ethnicity included 60.35% White Non-Hispanic, 8.11% Asian, 11.71% Hispanic or Latino, 10.04% African American, with 9.79% composed of American Indian, International, Native Hawaiian, two or more races or race, and ethnicity unknown. There are 4,753 faculty and staff, and by ethnicity 3,344 identified as White, 160 as U.S. nonresident, 92 as two or more races, 27 with ethnicity unknown, 310 as Hispanic/Latino, 523 as Black or African American, and 297 as Asian.

Research Participants

In identifying the participants, my approach included a subjective method of nonprobability sampling known as convenience sampling. This is important as the demographic at the research site mirrors that of the student population being majority White, and convenience sampling allows the researcher easier access to participants. Sampling in IPA requires the researcher to provide full appreciation to each participant, and in order to provide this level of appreciation IPA studies are typically small (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

Additionally, in IPA I aimed to produce an in-depth examination and not to generate a theory, which makes it inappropriate to use a large sample size (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). With the recommended amount being five to eight to ensure an appropriate examination of similarities and differences between participants (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). My targeted population included participants who had at least 4 years of post-graduate experience as mid- to senior-level student affairs professionals from different functional areas such as persistence and retention programs, recreational and wellness centers, residential learning and university housing, financial aid, advising, and other departments focused on holistic student success. Additionally, they had worked with racially minoritized students within the past 4 years and served in their roles on predominantly white campuses. These professionals also identified as Black and/or African American, or Hispanic and non-White, or Latino/x.

I selected this population as the racial battle fatigue (RBF) model started first with examining Black faculty and then developed to examine the experience of Latino/x students as well as other racially minoritized identity groups as more literature was

produced (Pierce, 1970, 1995; Smith, 2004, 2009a, 2009b; Smith et al., 2011). Additionally, this population oftentimes works with racially minoritized students and has the responsibility of addressing concerns of racism and social injustices within their roles that are emotionally and physically taxing (Husband, 2016; Quaye et al., 2019). The criteria for participants to qualify included identifying as racially minoritized. Participants had to be mid- to senior-level professionals, which required that they had at least 4 years post-graduate school experience. They would have worked with racially minoritized students within the past 4 years and served in their roles on predominantly white campuses.

I included participants in the study from different functional areas on the campus. This required that I identify them through the diversity, equity, and inclusion staff data located via the institution's dashboard. After identifying them I emailed to see if they qualify, and once I identified if they qualified I invited them to participate in the study. Upon accepting the invite, I provided a thorough explanation of the study as well as its purpose along with the safeguards developed for participation protection. I then provided each participant with a consent form and details of their agreement alongside standards for confidentiality.

Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews

It was my primary concern to produce rich and detailed first-person accounts while collecting data and investigating the phenomena (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In collecting data for IPA research, the instrument for data collecting must be open-ended and adjustable (Smith & Osborn, 2009). For my research study, I conducted semi-

structured interviews to capture the essence of the participants' experiences. There was one interview with a time limit of 60 minutes with participants who are over the age of 18 years (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Semi-structured interviews are used when the interview has a specific topic to learn about and has a limited number of questions in advance with a series of follow-up questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

I obtained written consent from the participants prior to the interviews. The form informed them that they would be audio recorded via virtual audio recording technology. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed after in order to capture the participants' experiences. After the audio recordings were transcribed the data were coded, which allowed for themes to emerge based on the data transcribed. These data were collected in the spring and summer of 2023. These interviews captured the experience of racially minoritized student affairs professionals at predominately white institutions who have had to respond to perceived racial microaggressions and the health consequences associated with these experiences.

This study included a semi-structured interview process followed by follow-up interviews as needed. Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that the advantages of interviews include participants providing historical facts while allowing the researcher to control the line of questioning. Disadvantages include indirect information filtered through the participants' experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The semi-structured interview protocol has allowed me to create a series of in-depth interview questions with respect to my topic, which have follow-up questions that do not intentionally guide the participant but allow for them to discuss their experiences. To assist with establishing the environment, the participant identified a location where they feel most comfortable

participating in the interview. The participant was able to identify a secluded space on campus, off-campus, or virtually.

Prior to this, I informed the participants that should they need to inquire further about different elements of the interview, they can contact me via email or phone to discuss this in greater detail. The interview allowed me to have the participants reflect on their responses. This reflection is important to deepen the meaning-making that they made while experiencing racial microaggressions and the different responses they had as a result of the race-related stress. I intend to build rapport with the participants while participating in active listening and engagement. This qualitative interviewing style, referred to as responsive interviewing, allows the participant to speak and share in a manner that they would not typically do in other settings (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

"Triangulation involves the careful reviewing of data collected through different methods in order to achieve a more accurate and valid estimate of qualitative results for a particular construct" (Oliver-Hoyo & Allen, 2006, p. 1). The different methods for this study included a semi-structured interview, observations and field notes, as well as journaling and potential follow-up interviews. Any follow-up interview served as an opportunity after the semi-structured interview if it had been decided based on participant responses that more meaning-making and essence capturing was needed. In alignment with IPA research, there were from five to eight participants. This is important as data triangulation accuracy of conclusions assists with mitigating risks while providing the researcher with an in-depth understanding of the investigation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Maxwell, 2012; Morgan, 1997).

Data Analysis

As the researcher, I totally immersed myself in analyzing the data “or in other words, try to step into the participants’ shoes as far as possible” (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014, p. 10). Analysis in IPA required me to be flexible in my thinking while following flexible guidelines according to my research objectives (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). In order to conduct a phenomenological analysis, there are six practical approaches researchers must include in their process (Creswell & Poth, 2016). These include:

> (a) describe personal experiences with the phenomenon under study; (b) develop a list of significant statements about how individuals are experiencing the topic; (c) develop significant statements about the topic and then group them into larger units of information; (d) write a description of what the participants in the study experience with the phenomenon using verbatim examples; (e) write a description of how the experience happened; and (f) write a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating both the textural and structural descriptions. (p. 159)

This approach followed by transcribing and coding my semi-structured interview is vital to the data analysis. A code is a word or phrase that assigns essence-capturing for language or visual data (Saldaña, 2016). Coding is the representation of the researcher’s analytical process, which helps the researcher to become familiar with the data and the participants' experiences (Saldaña, 2016). With the qualitative data, I involved two cycles of coding including first-cycle coding and second-cycling coding.

First Cycle Coding

The analysis that was used to analyze the data in this qualitative research study is action coding or first-cycle process coding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña & Omasta, 2016). Different first-cycle coding methods include in vivo, process, and initial coding for the beginning stages of data analysis (Saldaña, 2016). Since coding is a cyclical act, the first cycle is precise (Saldaña & Omasta, 2016). The coding process was developed with the intent of understanding the experiences and reflections of racially minoritized student affairs professionals.

Second Cycle Coding

Pattern coding or second cycle coding was used to understand and explain the salience and importance in the participants' daily lives (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Saldaña, 2016). Second cycle methods include focused, axial, and theoretical coding, which include constantly comparing and reorganizing codes into categories (Saldaña & Omasta, 2016). Second-cycle coding is the analysis that enables the researcher to develop multiple codes from the first cycle into more concise major concepts, categories, or narratives. Creating concepts or narratives that emerge from this pattern coding allow for the development of potential themes that come from the experience of the participants.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness requires me as the researcher to focus on the credibility and generalizability of the finding of the study (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Trustworthiness includes findings that have been found to be worth taking account of and potential readers have to trust and believe in its integrity (Lincoln & Guava, 1985; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Developing one's skills as a researcher enhances validity and trustworthiness as the researcher becomes more competent in knowing how to ask, invite, and engage in questions (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Trustworthiness also requires the researcher to develop relationships that genuinely protect their participants and their knowledge while also maintaining the standards for the systematic inquiry expected by various committees of practice (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Moreover, trustworthiness is determined by member checking, triangulation, and peer debriefing (Creswell, 1998, McCoy, 2006). Member check-ins are important to trustworthiness as they allow the participants to provide feedback through accuracy as they can review the researcher's conclusions for accurate illustrations of participants' experiences (Creswell, 1998, McCoy, 2006). Member check-ins are an important part of the systematic research process as the researcher is to ethically conduct the study with sensitivity to power dynamics (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Systematic practice includes using significant questions that can be investigated empirically; linking to relevant theory; providing direct investigation, coherent and explicit chain of reasoning; generalizing across studies; and disclosing research to encourage professional scrutiny and critique (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Neuman (2000) shared that when participants understand the researcher's description as reflective, then it can be identified as member valid. This also means that participants can openly object to the researchers' description if they do not think the conclusions accurately portray their experiences (Neuman, 2000). Triangulation allowed me as the researcher to properly review my findings and verify that comprehensive data points are being connected throughout the research process.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration includes the researcher defending the intended study and then acquiring the institutional review board's (IRB) approval in order to ethically conduct the study. Once IRB approval was obtained, the active researcher provided participants with the intent of the study and thereafter obtained consent for all processes involved with investigating their experiences.

Summary

There have been many different methods of inquiry to understand how racially minoritized student affairs professionals respond to racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue. Although scholars have examined the racial battle fatigue phenomenon for racially minoritized faculty and students, there is still very little research that aims to understand the phenomenon as experienced by racially minoritized student affairs professionals (Quaye et al., 2019). This distinction is important as this study focused specifically on the experiences of racially minoritized student affairs professionals.

Throughout Chapter 3, I have addressed all of the aspects of my research design and have provided the rationale for using qualitative research as my method of inquiry

and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as the strategy. This included discussing the importance of the participants' experiences and the use of semi-structured interviews.

This format, while also using bracketing to heighten focus and attention on the participant and their experience with the phenomenon instead of centering my view and opinion on their narrative, was very important. It also includes the important role that I have as a researcher regarding my biases and assumptions which I also reflected on in my worldview regarding racially minoritized student affairs professionals. Additionally, I discussed the methods I used for the data collection strategy and the considerations for establishing trustworthiness.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter presented findings of the phenomenological study conducted to explore how racially minoritized student affairs professionals experienced racial battle fatigue (RBF) at predominately white institutions (PWIs) and the impact it had on their health. The use of an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) in this study was important as it provided a detailed examination of the participants' lives as the participants discussed their personal and social experiences. The design of this study had strong philosophical underpinnings associated with conducting interviews (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

IPA granted the participants an opportunity to provide a rich description of their experiences with racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue (RBF). This form of storytelling for racially minoritized individuals is also a central element of critical race theory (CRT; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). The unique voice-of-color element identifies patterns and signs of racism and racial exclusion and provides perspectives from racially minoritized people to reexamine the experiences by which race and racism have been negotiated (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Detailed perceptions and the meaning-making process of participants have been recommended as the most flexible data collection instrument and as a result, this chapter presents the findings for each of the study's guiding research questions (Smith & Osborn, 2009).

For this research study, there were seven racially minoritized student affairs professionals from Modern University. Each participant also met the sampling criteria. The criteria included at least 4 years of post-graduate experience as mid- to senior-level

student affairs professionals from different functional areas such as persistence and retention programs, recreational and wellness centers, residential learning and university housing, financial aid, advising, and other departments focused on holistic student success. Each participant had also worked with racially minoritized students within the past 4 years and served in their roles on predominantly white campuses. As a way to ensure privacy each participant created and provided their own pseudonym. This chapter included participant profiles identified in Table 1 and then transitioned into five major themes that emerged from this study.

Table 1

Racially Minoritized Student Affairs Participant Profiles

Name	Identity	Gender	Years in education	Department
Adele	Black	Female	10	Athletics
Becky	Black	Female	10	Persistence & Access
Exx	Latina	Female	23	Academic Advising
Katie	Black	Female	15	Virtual Design
Soar Sister	Black	Female	10	Student Success
MPH	Black	Male	15	College Advising
Maleone	Black	Male	12	Student Success

Participants' Profiles

Adele

Adele was a student affairs professional who identified as a Black woman. Adele served in a role as an assistant director with athletics. Adele had a focus and expertise within tennis and she also handled all risk management and emergency action procedures within their department. Adele explained that in addition to her job title, a lot of their day-to-day work focused on student development and working with students to support them as she supervised quite a large student staff. Adele shared that they spent a lot of time, energy, and efforts into the development of their team. This included multiple one-on-one meetings, discussing their performance with them, having check-ins, but ultimately by trade they handled [tennis] and risk management.

Becky

Becky was a student affairs professional who identified as a Black woman. Becky had approximately a decade of experience within higher education and had served in various roles. Becky served in a role as an associate director within her department that focused on persistence and access. Becky's role included many responsibilities that happened behind the scenes and although her role was not student facing, she has been assisting the department with seeing students as there was a staffing need. Becky was responsible for handling high-level reports, the coordination of coaching for students, in addition to supporting her supervisor in responsibilities as needed. Becky's role also included high levels of collaboration with the state, updating reports, and compiling data to report to the state, which was supported by the information technology department on

campus. Becky shared that as a Black woman her experience in higher education had been very challenging and taxing.

Exx

Exx was a student affairs professional who identified as a Puerto Rican, Latina woman. Exx has approximately 25 years of experience in higher education and has served in different functional areas. Exx identified serving as an academic advisor. Within her role Exx advised students on their degree completion sequence, discussed requirements based on the [specific] majors she advised, and provided guidance to students based on the college as well as the state's requirements. Exx explained that her role required many emails and phone calls throughout the day lending to it being very fast paced and requiring attention to detail as she completed monitoring and tracking for all of the students on her caseload. Throughout her 25 years, Exx has shared that as a Latina, she often was the only person in the room who shared her identity.

Katie

Katie was a student affairs professional who identified as a Black woman. Katie had approximately 15 years of experience within various functional areas within higher education. Katie had shifted from advising students to working directly with faculty and the service department. In this role, Katie designed courses via the university's learning management system. This role required Katie to provide courses for the university based on student perspectives so that the students had a sound understanding of what was required from them in their courses. For example, Katie had to meet with faculty and review academic content and instructions so that they could be provided to students in their language making them easier for them to understand. With there being more modes

of delivery for academic instruction, Katie provided a student-centered approach to academic instruction for students who had taken classes in an online format. Katie shared that as a Black woman there were not many colleagues who look like her or had the same experience so making connections on campus was very limited.

Soar Sister

Soar Sister identified as a Black woman. Soar Sister had served at her institution for approximately 10 years with additional experience in healthcare and education. As a senior administrator, Soar Sister shifted from DEI and wellness to working directly with administration and faculty. With her role she also reviewed and updated any gaps pertaining to policies at their institution. This role also required that she meet with outside constituents and understand their practices with respect to inclusivity, wellness, and students who were at risk mentally, emotionally, and/or academically.

MPH

MPH identified as a Black man who had served as a student affairs professional for 15+ years. In his role as an administrator, he had a caseload of 200+ students and provided them with advice on how to be successful throughout their college careers. A high number of his student population came from underrepresented and underserved backgrounds. In addition to advising those students, MPH also provided guidance with the financial aid aspect of their student profiles, which included understanding federal and state guidelines that regulated and monitored the amount of aid distributed to the students for the academic year. MPH also had the responsibility of managing the student staff for the program that included programming and addressing community issues and concerns for the incoming students in the summer prior to their matriculation. His

responsibilities also included teaching classes focused on practical skills students will use in their day-to-day lives in and outside of the classroom. MPH shared that many times when they are selected to serve on a committee or share their expertise it made them question whether it was due to their race instead of the skills that they possessed and how they could contribute to the pressing need.

Maleone

Maleone identified as a Black man and served as a student affairs professional for approximately 10 years. Within his role as an assistant director, he had a caseload of students and provided them with advice on their day-to-day interactions throughout their college careers and holistic wellness. Many of his students identified as underrepresented, which included first generation. Maleone shared that burnout is unfortunately a reality of his role, and as a Black man he had been intentional about his health. This intentionally had come from Maleone witnessing the downfall of Black and Brown men who had prioritized their careers over their health ultimately to be passed up for promotional opportunities that they were qualified for at the institution.

Each participant met the criteria for the study and voluntarily participated in the study. Ultimately one of the participant’s responses were omitted as their experience was unique and did not provide them with much experience as to respond to the questions discussed in the themes presented. The next section will review the themes and participant voices.

Themes

The themes that emerged during the data analysis provided awareness into how racially minoritized student affairs professionals experienced racial battle fatigue at their predominantly white institutions (PWIs) and the impact it has had on their health. The themes include (a) battling impostor syndrome, (b) they ain't colorblind, (c) racialized glass ceiling, (d) smoke and mirrors, (e) uncovering psychological stressors, and (f) reclaiming wellness. Each experience that was shared provided voice to the health consequences experienced by the participants at their PWIs. For the seven participants, they identified that their encounters as racially minoritized student affairs professionals included having to navigate the campus racial climate with stressors at different levels, which prompted unique ways of coping to maintain their stress responses and levels.

Battling Impostor Syndrome

Approximately six of the seven participants shared that throughout their professional journeys at PWIs there were moments where they felt as if they did not professionally measure up to their white dominant-group colleagues. Participants identified moments in which they questioned their own competencies and professional legitimacy. This feeling of inadequacy would often be associated with fulfilling a role or task. Often this feeling of fraudulence or phoniness was heightened early in their careers while working with their dominant-group colleagues. Participant voices defined battling impostor syndrome as navigating predominantly white spaces and the constant feelings of self-doubt of inadequacy within their role, department, or institution. Katie who has 15 years of experience within the field remembered early moments from her journey and stated:

Over the span of close to 15 years I have changed in such a way, and I think it's not only those experiences that I said, but also world events, national events that have happened that have shaped me. When I first started as a professional in higher ed at a PWI, I felt the need to be a people pleaser. I felt the need to always have a smile, to always be willing to go above and beyond, and always willing to say, yes, I can do that because I felt like I wanted to break down those stereotypes that they had but as I begin to mature, not only in who I was, but professionally, I just started to stand on my own and say that no, I'm enough, and what I do professionally is enough…

With this reflection, Katie went on to share:

The underlying thing to all of this was am I not good enough to be in this space? I can't speak for every person of color, but I think that's a common theme. Am I worthy enough to be in this? And now I come out on the other side of it, and I told you how I am now. Having matured. I am who I am, and I stand on my work, and I know I'm worthy right but that's not always the case with every person of color that works at a PWI. And that's one thing, you know, when I get the opportunity, I mentor new people that come through, I want them to know that from the very beginning that you deserve to have a seat at the table. You deserve to be here. You spend a lot of time worrying about stuff like that.

Becky reflected on experiences she had directly within her department. During the experiences she questioned the quality of her work, the functional area she was in, and developed a system for when those moments of self-doubt become heightened. Becky stated:

> I was not treated the same as other divisional leaders, and it was certain things that I picked up on that really made me challenge myself and question myself and my capabilities. It made me feel a little less confident, or felt less valued at times, because it was a time when I would be belittled… like the work that I was doing was something that did not contribute to our institution.

When Becky learned that a less qualified colleague was making more than her, Becky also shared:

> It's very stressful because I'm questioning and doubting everything that I do, because now it went into my self-worth. When it came to my job I thought that I was doing an amazing job, I received nothing but praises … I just don't understand, when it's me as a Black woman against this White male, I'm still falling short. I know that I have more knowledge, I have more experience, and it made me really question myself. But then, at the same time, it also made me go harder. It made me push even harder.

MPH identified that sometimes he questioned his own credentials. This included him reflecting on cultural norms, the U.S. education system and day-to-day tasks where he was required to communicate with diverse groups. As MPH recalled some of these moments he stated:

> Outside of my office, in different meetings, you realize that, there's not a lot of people that look like you at all. [You] maybe sometimes question, is your education that you received on the same level of education that they received. Even though you might have the same degree, you question it because learning has never been the same if it was from high school, elementary school, [or]

college. So, the same struggles you might have had doesn't change because you're an adult with a master's degree. So [you make sure] the deficiencies are not on show, or that you're not sounding uneducated when you're talking. Like when you send emails out and try to make sure that they make sense and are logical. The same way that you might have gone to the writing center to ensure that your papers make sense, you would have someone double check your writing … to make sure that you are not being viewed as less than or incompetent. I know when I went for my first review I wasn't exactly sure that they were gonna give me a renewal because I didn't know if I was doing enough for people to say that I belonged. No one said I wasn't doing enough, I guess it's just a feeling that you work in this office [supporting underrepresented students] a lot of times and people still don't know who you are or what you do.

For Exx, they described how battling with impostor syndrome impacted them emotionally and again, echoing challenges with self-doubt. Exx stated:

Emotionally it impacts the way in which you see yourself and the way in which you're able to complete tasks and responsibilities. If I were to think about the span of my career and some of the leadership that I had that wasn't always so good, that leadership always had me questioning my own ability. You know, oftentimes feeling like I was ill equipped or not knowledgeable enough … that I shouldn't say anything.

Exx also candidly expressed:

My wellness is affected because of the personal stuff that I got going on. That makes me even more conscious to be aware of what I'm doing and how I'm doing

> it. The pressure becomes even higher to make sure I'm not making a mistake, because I don't want anybody to say I'm underperforming because I have these personal things going on. It's almost like I don't have the grace to have that, because I'm already in a marginalized group. Now I am adding all these other layers … what are other people gonna say, is it going to fulfill some type of stereotype and do my abilities come into question.

Participants shared that sometimes they experienced impostor syndrome more in the start of their career. Nevertheless, the participants identified that impostor syndrome impacted their professional and professional views of themselves as well as their emotional well-being at PWIs. Furthermore, participants identified instances in which they or other racially minoritized professionals were direct targets for subtle, direct, or indirect insults from their White colleagues. The next theme explored how participants identified that their race still matters and played in a role in the treatment they received at Modern University.

They Ain't Colorblind

The first theme explored how SAPs experienced challenges that made them question their existence from simple quick interactions with White colleagues to their professional existence at their PWIs. While exploring participant experiences, elements of CRT began to emerge as participants identified that whiteness and white supremacy are still pervasive. Participants voiced the complexities of dealing with and managing whiteness at their PWI and the strain it placed on them both professionally and personally. Additionally, color blindness or color-blind racism occurs when White people assert that they do not see a person's color (Savas, 2014). Furthermore, color-blind

racism is harmful as it ignores racialized experiences, the racism that racially minoritized people face on a daily basis, and it makes racially minoritized people responsible for social inequities (Savas, 2014). In the following responses participants shared how racial microaggressions and racism were subtle and pervasive from their White colleagues. Participants explored how these experiences further impacted their professional experiences and personal health

MPH shared that navigating whiteness becomes heightened especially when he is in a room with White colleagues, and the conversation is a social justice issue. MPH noted that although these conversations happen often, he often has to connect the dots about the Black experience and social inequities for everyone in the room:

> Yeah, it usually happens the most when you feel like you have to speak for your ethnicity. You have to speak for your race because something's going on and everyone's talking about it, and no one seems to be able to connect the dots, and you have to be the one to connect the dots for them. That sometimes becomes very cumbersome and tiresome when you've got to speak for a whole race of people when this is how you feel but there's no one else in there that can say anything, and people in the room are not getting why this is a problem, or why this needs to be changed. So, you have to be the person. So, there's been meetings with different situations … and you gotta paint a picture because they are just not getting it and don't understand ... So sometimes, you have to take a step back and realize that this might be the most interaction they have with someone who doesn't look like them is when they come to work because their life may be set up a certain way where they don't have to interact with anyone else. We work with

people who don't interact with people of color at all, so their viewpoints are not gonna meet our viewpoints and most of our supervisors are not going to be a person of color …

Becky stated:

I would say, some things are very subtle, [so] if you were to try to question them, you would be perceived as a person who just has a problem where you see everything from a racial lens. So, it's this constant state of you questioning, did you really experience what you think you just experienced, or did you really feel what you think you just felt? Oftentimes I would say in my previous role after every divisional meeting, I walked away feeling that way. Because in meetings I would be completely ignored and I thought, there's no way that you're this oblivious or you don't know what you're doing to me. For example, everyone in the meeting shared. [My supervisor] would say who he wanted to share next and then they're like, "okay, yeah, everybody shared." And then somebody would say, well, [Becky] didn't go, or he'll say, Oh! I'm sorry [Becky] didn't go and now it's at the end of the meeting, and I have to speed up the report that I have to give.

In a recent experience, Exx also had to navigate deficit perspectives from colleagues who were assessing their work with underrepresented students in their department. Exx discussed:

Just recently we were at a retreat and there's one other person of color. The conversation came up about some of our pipeline programs. [They started off with] what is it about [our underrepresented] students and our pipeline programs and what happens to them when they get into the institution? Why can't they do

> it? Why can't they do the work? And so, during the conversation [I] had to really dig into issues about race, access and equity for [racially minoritized and underrepresented students].

Katie recalled sitting at a table with a group of White colleagues and they began to discuss a colleague. Katie remembered the language and discussion vilifying the colleague and it reminded Katie of racial microaggressions that Black women typically are associated with in society. Katied shared:

> There was a time when I was [student facing] and I was sitting at lunch with a group of White women colleagues. I was the only Black woman and they were discussing another colleague, a woman of color and they were describing her body language and how they felt offended by her body language, and her nonverbal gestures and they were saying that in a way that I felt very uncomfortable. So, for example, they were saying that this person often had their arms crossed and that they felt like this woman was staring at them for long periods of time and that her body language said that she was dismissive. I had never heard them use such language when referring to any other person that wasn't of color. It was very demeaning to me and I felt attacked because Black women historically have this stereotype of being standoffish, and being deemed angry Black women, and they were saying that her body language represented that without her saying a word to them.

Maleone identified that colleagues would mistake him for a student and expressed how there could be underlying assumptions and biases about him being a Black man with his credentials. Maleone stated:

> Early on, when I first started working here, just appearing as a young African American male, I did know a lot of professionals, fellow professionals. Here [at the institution], they would assume I was a student as opposed to being a professional. I'm not saying I don't know if it's from me looking younger, or them in their mind not being able to fathom a young Black American male having the credentials to serve in this role or capacity at a major university.

Adele shared that on a day-to-day basis she ensured that racially minoritized students received fair treatment in white spaces on campus. Adele stated:

> We have a lot of White students who work in our spaces ... I'll sometimes [walk] up there on my lunch break. I feel very protective of our Black students that are up there when there's a White student working. So, if a Black student isn't using clips on his barbell and a White student isn't using clips on his barbell, I'm paying attention to how they are managing and supervising that space. I feel extremely alert and on edge and protective of Black students. Whether they're on our staff, whether they're entering our building in our space, whether I'm walking past them on campus, and they're entering halls I just feel like a protective mama bear... and it's a lot of work, and you just get so used to it that you don't even realize that that's what you're doing

Many of these reflections explored participants' thoughts within the situation. After exploring their thoughts, reflections, and awareness, the next theme emerged that focused on participants' abilities and opportunities for advancing professionally. Although opportunities may have been available to White professionals, the participants explored why those important opportunities seemed out of reach for them.

Racialized Glass Ceiling

For many of the participants, numerous challenges arose that made them hesitant to be promoted or move up professionally. These challenges allowed them to understand that there would be no opportunities for promotion awarded to them based on the culture at the PWI and the encounters that they had with their White colleagues. Participants also shared these challenges were also tied to overt acts of racism they witnessed towards racially minoritized professionals at Modern University. Thus, through participant voices, the racialized glass ceiling theme emerged, which explored how whiteness and racism made advancing professionally at their PWI seem virtually impossible. Maleone stated that he had hesitancy in being promoted and identified that racism within the system would make being promoted as a Black male something that could negatively impact him. Maleone stated:

> I think to a degree I'm more hesitant to want to move up and be promoted. I mean because of the conditions and the blatant racism … you know, you would have to deal with it on the daily. That impacts me [want to advance professionally] in a negative way …

MPH shared that at Modern University, there are much less racially minoritized staff in senior level positions, and the representation decreases when one accounts for men in those roles. He identified that it becomes an internalized conversation about whether or not promotion is something that would be in the best interest for him and his family. MPH stated:

> If you're thinking about moving into higher levels, management has even less people of color in those positions. And then when you look at gender depending

on the timeframe, there's less representation of gender. So you may see people of color, but then you don't see males. It's just a hard time trying to internalize, is this going to be the next move for me? Is it something that I should do? Is it something that's gonna be in the best interest for my family and things of that nature. Once you move up, there are more expectations, you're in more of a spotlight, the more your deficiencies are now going to be at the front if you have them.

Exx explained that she was always provided with more responsibilities and assignments but never provided with a pathway for promotion at Modern University. Even after earning a terminal degree, the feelings of racism and lack of support for her advancement become more blatant. Exx stated:

> If I were to think about professional development and opportunities for advancement, I feel like early on in my career I didn't really have those opportunities, [more responsibility] was just given to me, more responsibility, more responsibility. It wasn't ever a conversation about the promotion pipeline or how we can advance you. You would see other people in the department getting advanced and I worked really hard for a doctorate degree, pushing forward in terms of education. However there never really seemed to be anything for me in that space and feeling the racism I feel like there were times that it was blatant that I didn't belong in spaces.

For Becky, she had a very challenging situation in which she identified discrepancies in hiring and pay practices. After much deliberation and fact finding, her

experience led her to a space of identifying that her race and potentially gender played a role in pay discrimination. Becky stated:

> I personally experienced it. Where it was a pain. It was me and another [White] colleague. We came in during the very same day, he started as a coordinator. I started as an assistant director, and he started off making more than me, and I had a higher level of education than him. I came from having more experience than him, and I didn't notice it until several years later when I was getting a promotion, because I wrote a grant for the institution. I was just given a salary and I had no say or input so I challenged it like, no, we're supposed to negotiate, why is there no opportunity to negotiate? I was told to share this with the president. So now I have to go back to the president and rightfully so, as I should have had an opportunity to at least negotiate and so the number that they were offering me was still less than the number that the person who came in with less education, less experience, and a lesser title than me, it was still lower than his, so I questioned it. I questioned it, and I brought it up, and I provided names, and I provided artifacts, which were board minutes, and I just questioned it. Ultimately, I just played like I don't understand what the difference is I don't understand why this person was even brought in making more than me and if I'm getting a promotion to a directorial level, and this person is still just a coordinator who doesn't have a master's and doesn't have the level of experience that I have, I don't understand why it's so challenging for me to even make the same amount that he's making. So, I was like, what is the difference, to leave it open to [my boss] to answer, and I was just told, "Well, I'm not increasing it."

Sister Soar noted that she shared with her White supervisors that due to their history of mishandling her professional inquiries that she knew the systems within the department would not support her advancement or promotion. Sister Soar stated:

> I was very clear at that time saying I'm well aware when my promotion comes it's not coming from this department, it's gonna come from outside of this department. So, it was kind of like this dialectic, where I was feeling discouraged as well on one end and then there was this other part of me where I was having this drive to recognize there is more for me beyond these four walls that I was in at the time, because I often felt like I was being confined. I was being restricted. So that's the reason why I was doing so many other things outside of my department, because I didn't feel like I could have the freedom and the full liberty to be who I was not only as an [administrator], so I was able to flourish in other spaces outside of my set professional home.

Some of the challenges also happened more overtly in conversations with supervisors and were met with lack of support ultimately discouraging chances for promotion. Participants reflected on the overt racism that occurs and how they were provided more responsibilities and less chances for promotion. The next theme emerged as participants continued to address deficiencies with the institution. The focus included how the institution lacked opportunities for development as well as a commitment to the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) values it espoused.

Smoke and Mirrors

Participants identified that there is a lack of congruence between the actual commitment behind DEI initiatives and the espoused values institutions advertise. Participants voiced that the institution’s colleges and departments are not meeting the need for faculty and staff representation. The participants also identified that there is a lack of diverse hiring practices and ultimately asserted that restructuring to address racism and racial campus climates was needed. Modern University stated they fully supported DEI initiatives; however, participants addressed there is still underrepresentation in the campus community. Katie stated that there should be alignment between the policies shared by the institution and the stakeholders. Katie explained:

> That's the thing. The policy and the practice need to be in alignment. Oftentimes we have these policies in place, but they're not practical. So, we have these divisions like a DEI division. However, it's just something that's written on a paper that no one really follows, because even when it's hiring, you see different hiring practices. You see that it's nepotism when you actually get the chance to see the other side, and how things truly operate is just really a gimmick. So, I would say, that's the thing. Just make sure that the policies and the practices actually add up.

During her interview, Katie added:

> There are not many colleagues that look like me or have the same experiences as me. So, when it comes time to make connections with colleagues, it can be somewhat limited. With that, the very few colleagues that I work with, [I] don't

want to burden them because there's not many of them, and a lot of people are looking to build connections with those individuals. So, for example, I don't want to go to my colleague and burden them with all of the challenges that I may be going through, because I know that another colleague that shares similar experiences, from an underrepresented background may be doing the same thing because it's not that many of us. So, an opportunity to connect for mentorship is limited and dealing with microaggressions, that is a challenge and … how do I process these feelings? Who can I discuss it with? Who do I feel safe discussing it with?

Exx identified that there should be more conversations, more training, more opportunities for critical research, and more opportunities for advancement and promotion. These are vital supports that should be promoted and supported by the institution for racially minoritized student affairs professionals. Exx stated:

> We spend a lot of time understanding our underrepresented students of color, and we don't spend enough time understanding our underrepresented student affairs professionals. We're interacting with our White counterparts on a daily basis when they are perpetuating culture that is oppressive. They do not recognize some of the flaws in the way in which they advocate for diversity and access, professional development, or pipelining for all. They also do not give voice to the experiences of us as Black and Brown professionals. There needs to be something done whether it's more sensitivity training, whether it's more conversations ... and not just professional development. Actual opportunities for visibility, opportunities for research. It starts with training. It starts with conversation, but

there has to be an acknowledgement, right? Because institutional culture can be ingrained for such a long time.

Sister Soar had an aha moment when she identified that each department and college should have their own climate survey to gather a pulse of what supports are needed for racially minoritized student affairs professionals. Sister Soar explained:

> I'm having an aha moment in saying this, it's not solely the responsibility of our division of DEI to be the model for others. Departments and colleges should help shape and develop the policies and how they can be implemented university wide. Then something else that I think could potentially help and this is something that I did in my role as [administrator] within my previous department and was often heard about the University climate survey, operative word university. Sometimes it could be a little bit more digestible if there was a policy, and this is something I had talked about, and maybe could happen, where all colleges and departments develop their own internal climate survey and this climate survey could potentially help with retention of our Black and Brown communities. Whether that's the dean, whether that's the VP, so that's something that I would love to see happen within colleges and universities. So again, I think sometimes even with the university campus climate survey, the response rates can be really low and individuals aren't taking advantage of it, and that's not to say that the response rates could not be low within a department. It's still what we're talking about to bring about change; it can still happen within the departments and divisions, and so forth.

MPH reflected on the lack of intentional cluster hiring of racially minoritized professionals at Modern University. This was important as MPH identified that the professionals should represent the student body that they serve due to research stating this helps with retention and sense of belonging. MPH stated:

> I think they intentionally need to hire more people that represent this university as a whole. I mean, they say that they want a diverse student population, but they don't have a diverse employee population. So, we need to intentionally hire people that look diverse as the students … because people need to see representation. We don't have that. We're seeing more of our Indian population on campus. Where do people who identify as Indian in student affairs, where are they at the institution? … They need to be more intentional, making sure that their staff represents their student population.

Thus far participants have shared how their experiences have included battling impostor syndrome, racial microaggressions, limited professional opportunities, and flawed values and community at their PWI. For some of the participants this has led to distressing health conditions. These conditions as a result of facing daily racism and race-related stress can lead to social–psychological stress responses as well as RBF, which participants discussed in the next theme (Smith et al., 2011).

Uncovering Psychological Stressors

Participant exploration with flawed values, racial microaggressions, and race-related stressors often resulted in responses that included frustration, anxiety, worry, disappointment, helplessness, and anger. These participants' explorations identified the emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion they experienced professionally and personally, which is also associated with RBF. These experiences required participants to identify whiteness and racism while also minimizing how much of the race-related stress they internalized. In this section, participant voices reflected on the unique stress responses they had to manage while navigating whiteness, race related-stress and racial microaggressions. Maleone had witnessed the deleterious effects on the health of Black men in higher education during his tenure. In his reflection he stated:

> Higher ed is extremely stressful for Black men, and I'm just speaking from at least one thing that I've noticed is that the first thing to go for us is our health. This is just from me being around for years seeing a lot of Black male leaders in higher education. For lack of better words, seeing their downfall, because they're so focused on XY and Z as opposed to themselves … so I definitely agree that the burnout rate is high, especially when you're working with the first generation, non-traditional students ... We have to have a non-traditional approach, which could lead to longer work days, extended work hours, and things like that in addition to also being understaffed.

Becky shared that although she is not a person who typically gets anxious, the racial microaggressions and racist encounters did lead to her reporting higher anxiety. Becky stated:

> Yes, I feel my heartbeat and fast. Even though I'm trying to save face and I have a poker face on, my heart is beating fast and racing. I'm beginning to sweat a little because it's like I'm replaying constantly, just replaying, and that is the buildup of all of the incidents, especially if it's somebody like a supervisor who you're required to communicate with it is a sense of anxiety every single time, or feeling like I can't really articulate what I'm trying to say, because I'm constantly questioning either how it's going to come out. I have to make sure I'm super brilliant, making sure that what I'm saying is really making sense, and that is a way in which they understand. So now I'm trying to cater everything to like how he processes things … and I'm not the type of person to say I have anxiety or anything, but I felt like my anxiety definitely was activated.

Becky also reflected and provided a statement with respect to the importance of her well-being and how stressors impacts her role:

> Because if you're not well, then how are you going to pour from an empty cup? So, it affects your role because how can you really do it effectively? You're burnt out. You're exhausted. You have nothing left to give or you just do the bare minimum where you “quiet quit.” So, it's just that. When you're in a burnt-out state there's no way that you could really do your job truly, effectively, especially if you're working with students, basically, there's no way to do it effectively. But you just show up because you notice you have to show up. You just basically do the bare minimum within your job because you feel that there's nothing that you can really say that's going to change anything because it's your job to do whatever it is that you have to do.

Sister Soar recalled the emotional and the psychological impact it had on her as a professional:

> There was this emotional fatigue in that moment and that's the reason why I got to the point and said, I'm not doing this anymore. I'm not doing this anymore. So, there was this level of exhaustion, minority taxation and I also felt honestly, Julius, I was disappointed. I was disappointed. I was sad and the other side again I'm going back to this sense of feeling empowered and I put boundaries on myself by saying, no, I'm not doing this I'm not being part of this interview process anymore and as a result of me saying no, and setting my own limits that allowed me to flourish psychologically. Because I said no, if I silently continue to waddle and not say anything, it definitely would have had a different impact on me not only just emotionally, not only psychologically, but physically.

Sister Soar then identified how the physical stressors required her to stop and be intentional about the number of projects she took responsibility for in her role. It was important in mitigating any forms of exhaustion or poor job performance that she could have experienced. Sister Soar stated:

> I'm just mindful of the rate that I accelerate because I can burn myself out because I have so many ideas and so many things that are coming to my mind. Like, I see this, we can do this, we can do this, we can do this, we can do this, we can do that and having to temper it in such a way. As to say, what is the priority right now, and setting limits and setting boundaries for myself. So, I can do my best not to be burnt out while being in this role.

Katie shared that with 15 years in the field and her particular experience that the stressors and the need to code switch had become commonplace. Katie then discussed the anxiety she had to manage when her White colleagues entered a space that previously felt safe to her. Katie stated:

> If I'm talking to another individual of color I'm a little bit more relaxed. My shoulders are dropped, I can have a conversation that is somewhat relaxed but if a person is not of color, and I don't have a relationship with them then, I feel my shoulders get a little stiff and the anxiety kicks in, and I close up. I watch how I pronounce my words. Make sure it's grammatical, and I just make sure that I want them to perceive me in the best light or I wanted them to, I told you I made a transition, but that's the common belief when it comes to code switching right? That in itself is anxiety. Because if I'm talking to someone that looks like me, let's just paint a picture … If I'm at a cafeteria table, and I'm talking to somebody that looks like me, we have shared life experience and I'm relaxed. I'm just talking about my day and someone comes in that I'm uncomfortable with that doesn't look like me, I gotta change in an instant. Who wouldn't think that was anxiety? Oh, here comes somebody. Let me tighten up, let me get myself together. That's anxiety. Do that 5 days a week for 52 weeks. That's chronic anxiety.

Katie also remembered how her anxiety would be constant whenever she needed to have a challenging conversation with a White student. This anxiety came as a result of White students perceiving that Katie was not competent within her role. The students would then follow up with her department's chair. Katie shared:

If I had to say no to a student tomorrow, I would practice what I was going to say. I would make sure I had my documentation in order. It was something that I would bring home with me mentally to make sure that I got my wording correctly that there was nothing that they could get me on and that was anxiety … and during that time [with being bullied] there was a lot of replay in my mind about the events that happened. I guess that correlates a little bit with anxiety when things are on repeat, but constantly rethinking the series of events. It was a lot of mental anguish... Like it would wake me out of my sleep at 3 o'clock in the morning and I'll think about it.

Adele identified how her anxiety interfered with her personal life and how managing her anxiety at home required different levels of intention. Adele recalled:

For sure I get anxious. I get upset. Whether that's mad or frustrated, I don't ever really get sad. It impacts how I show up at home. I remember it impacted my evening and a few evenings in a row and then feeling anxious about it. Not that I had lost sleep over it. I wasn't tossing and turning about it, but like wanting to talk about it with my partner. So, bringing it back home, which doesn't always happen, and for one night, okay. But if it's consecutively the next night you gotta you have to be able to file some things away.

MPH stated that after years of situations with faculty and staff as well as heavy race-related conversations with changing generations at Modern University:

[I] just become more tired. Just don't wanna talk. Don't wanna really interact. Sometimes I get in my car and don't turn the radio on and just drive home. It's silent for 45 min. That way, I'm not gonna hear anyone’s thoughts but my own. I

just became more reserved. You become more to yourself when certain things get frustrating and mad. Now I just become more tired. Just more to myself. In terms of what I'm willing to share, how much energy I want to put into certain things and then what I'm willing to give. Now you get to a point where you just realize you can't give the same.

MPH then shared that within his role there are race-related stressors that he cannot change, and if he cannot separate those stressors he cannot be good to his students or colleagues. He stated:

> If you can't leave this at the job, you're gonna take it home. If you take it home you can be dealing with it all weekend and come right back to it on Monday. So it impacts all 3 [emotional, physical, and psychological] ... you may think that you have to get out of this environment and try something different or get away from it because it's just too much for you it becomes overbearing like you can't breathe if you don't have a way to express yourself. So yeah, definitely it impacts you if you can't separate it. If you can't learn how to leave certain things where they are and understand that you can't fix it or change everything. Then you're gonna run into a situation where you're gonna burn out even faster... So, it just becomes more taxing on people. Then just the stress levels keep on changing or increasing or getting worse. So, if you can't separate and understand some people are never gonna change, and that you've gotta just work around them you're gonna burn yourself out and not be good to anybody.

Participants shared in this section the stressors they experienced while serving in their roles at Modern University. These stressors included emotional, physical, and

psychological areas, which contributed to RBF experienced by the participants. There is new research identifying that student affairs work leads to more than being burned out, which is a declining interest to do one's work at all (Anderson, 2021). Researchers are now seeing a state that is coined as being *burned through*, and it includes high levels of exhaustion associated with extensive responsibilities in additional to RMSAPs' primary responsibilities (Anderson, 2021). It was not clear if the participants were prepared for the road that was ahead of them. However, they had incorporated strategies to maintain their commitment to racially minoritized students, faculty and staff. Parts of their coping strategies and systems are addressed in the next theme.

Reclaiming Wellness

Participants voiced strategies that have been most helpful for them in maintaining their health as they experienced challenges and race-related stress over the last decade and a half at Modern University and other PWIs. Two participants discussed the importance of their faith, while all other participants reflected on the practice of resetting. Resetting often required them to isolate after a professional interaction. This isolation would be at a place they found safe at work or completely outside of their professional settings. The practice then included processing what they were feeling, what about the situation brought on a specific emotion, and what would be helpful for them to work through feelings of anger, frustration, helplessness, and anxiety. In addition to the reset, participants discussed what allowed them to recharge themselves so that they could show up as their best selves despite the heightened race-related stressors they had to navigate. The reclaiming wellness theme consists of ways in which participants improved their spiritual, mental, and social connections after experiencing racial battle fatigue. Exx

reflected and shared that her faith was a source of self-care for her. Her reflection included:

> You know, sometimes I just have to take a minute. I rely a lot on my faith, and I rely a lot on just some quiet time. So sometimes I just need moments where I'm just really reflective. I just kinda I don't wanna say I shut down, but I just need time to unpack and process. Kinda think things through you know. Sometimes I have to leave something. I have to leave the conversation, and then kind of think about going back to it with a different lens and just, taking care of myself.

MPH identified that geographical boundaries were just as important as professional boundaries due to the frequency of interactions he stated:

> I would never live in this part of [the state], even though I'm 45 min away, because I will never get a break like I couldn't walk anywhere around here and not see a student, and they always want to talk to you. You don't want to be that person that doesn't want to talk, because they always wanna talk to you. They always wanna be around you. You can never get down time, so I can never live around here because I wouldn't ever be able to have any peace.

Sister Soar shared what she would recommend for other racially minoritized student affairs professionals. Additionally, she shared her own method of reclaiming her wellness included:

> I created a network of other associations that were affinity based in order for me to be fed and for me to grow because I knew that was my responsibility ... So, my first task is talking to my mom. Well, no, it's not first, because my initial would be the Lord. Praying and saying at that moment you need to help me. So, using my

spiritual faith-based intervention. Quoting scripture. Then call my mom, and she, depending on the intensity of the situation, may pray with me as well while quoting scripture. Talking to my best friend, to talk it through, even talking to some trusted professionals and even administrators at that particular time, within, and even outside of our current institution. Definitely a massage so I have a membership to the massage once a month. Spending time with my family and having a network of professionals who I can communicate with and having a community to share these experiences. So, it does not become internalized, because everything that I may mention about the emotional, psychological, and the physical a lot of that happens not all the time, but an ingredient of it happens because oftentimes it's internalized. We're not adaptively dealing with these antecedents in these situations when it happened. There could be settings in a space that welcome verbal and emotional expression. I had that freedom where some environments will compromise and cause some of our Black and Brown individuals to feel inhibited where they're not able to share it with their supervisor or upper level administration. So, I did have that freedom you know which was a blessing. I had outside resources to be able to support as well and I think the other part I had added … is therapy. So, the therapy is really, really important. I've had my own therapist, still have my own therapist to be able to have someone clinically trained to be able to help us get through the weeds in our own mind. I'm certainly a proponent, for a wellness coach, life coach, that would also be advice that I would give to a racially ethnic minority individual.

Soar Sister also shared:

> Being able to delegate, and I say that cautiously, from the standpoint of even if it's not my area of strength before I delegate happen to identify if this is a growth point in an area that I want to begin to enhance and develop and even in that for me, the timing to make sure again, I'm not putting too much on myself where it's impacted me physically. I am still not doing the best with my lunch by not taking it. I need to put it back in my schedule because I haven't, because in my mind I'm like, I will at this time, but it hasn't happened as deliberately as I would want. Similar to my massages, my vacations, and attending church weekly, making every effort. So, for example if I take work home at night, I have to be done by 8.

Katie also described how her experience came full circle. This allowed Katie to lean into her daily routines and mindfulness as helpful methods to reclaim her wellness, Katie stated:

> I felt the stress of working at a PWI and not feeling supported. You know my days were long. I'd come home. Don't have time to exercise. Don't have time to have a nutritious meal, right? Cause you I was just fatigued, now because I've built some proper support systems, you know. I make sure that I get time for exercise. I make sure that I have a nutritious meal. I make sure I make time, for you know my mental health, because in turn that makes me better. That makes me able to handle the stressors at work. So prior, okay, so I'm stressed. I'm fatigued. I came home. I don't eat a proper nutritious meal. I don't exercise. I don't have an outlet so the physical goes right back into my job, because now it's like a vicious circle. Now I'm tired at work. You're fatigued. I'm snappy then that goes right

back into I don't have time at home to do all the things I need to do to support myself.

Katie also shared that her very stressful experience with racism and racial battle fatigue resulted in:

> Starting therapy. I had the help of a licensed professional, and when I would discuss my anxiety and the fear that I had about this situation she initially told me to lean into it. I'm like, why do I wanna lean into it, it hurts when I lean into it like this is uncomfortable, right? But you have to lean into it to be able to say, sit in that space, sit in that uncomfortable space and ask yourself, how do I feel? What can I do to make myself feel better? So, I say lean into it instead of running away from it. So, if I had those thoughts I wouldn't just force myself to think of something else. I would say, okay, this is how I feel right now, let me sit in this. Let me process it. How do I feel? What can I do to make myself feel a little bit better? Sometimes there wasn't anything I could do to make myself feel better. So, I'm just gonna sit in it and see, okay, how does it feel?

Becky shared that the reset and recharging required being mindful of the time and space she let herself reflect on negative racial experiences. Becky stated:

> Honestly, it's like I allow myself to be in that moment and space very briefly. Then I have a pep talk in the mirror and I wipe myself, and I wipe my face. I say every affirmation that I could think of and I fix my crown. I walk out with my head held high and shoulders back like as if nothing ever happened.

Becky also identified that this also included assessing when it is the right time to have difficult conversations with her White colleagues. Becky explained how complex and challenging it could be when physical space at times are limited. Becky shared:

> It's a lot of self-preservation in a sense, when is the appropriate time to address something and then at times feeling like some people are just limited, it's hard because for some colleagues you can't limit your physical space around and your offices are right there next to each other, but it's just like I learned how to categorize people and how to deal with them accordingly.

Adele has identified that temporary solitude is needed. Adele was also aware of the time and space she allowed herself to reflect on the negative racial experiences as she did not want them to greatly interfere with her home life and marriage. Adele added:

> Sometimes I just like to shut down and need some alone time. So, some of those are really heavy, overwhelming, mental, mentally, emotionally emotional days. Maybe instead of coming home and eating dinner and watching a show with my partner, I isolate myself and need some downtime, which again impacts the connection that I have with my partner. So, one night of that is fine, but I feel like more than one night and consecutive I think that can then impact my personal life. So, I really try. I need this, I just need some space.

For MPH, resetting and recharging included being able to develop a routine that allowed him to intentionally be active in different areas of his life. MPH stated:

> I know for me it's just trying to get more of a routine of working out, trying to be more impactful with better eating habits. Trying to make sure I am taking time with the kids, with my spouse cause if not, you just sit there and veg out and won't

> do anything. So, I know for me, just trying to make sure that I'm doing other stuff and not letting this place kill me and take up all my time cause at the end of the day it's still a job, and they can replace me as soon as something goes wrong so nothing's guaranteed, nothing promised. So, you can't sit here and give a thousand percent and not give anything to the people who actually care about you. So, I tried to make sure I'm making better decisions and putting in time where it needs to go and not always be right about what's going on here.

Maleone also identified that healthy activities and putting one's wellness first was not only important but was an espoused value of his department. This meant it was important for him to "walk the walk" as well. Maleone shared:

> I react [to maintaining my well-being in my role] by making it a priority to keep things healthy or try to keep it as healthy as I can knowing that if I don't, it'd be a detriment to myself as opposed to it getting better. Which I have learned to do. I try to be as active as I can, which as a professional you gotta include that in your life in your daily planning, or it will fall to the wayside. So just just being more intentional with focusing on those areas and making sure I'm nourishing myself as well.

Katie shared that the boundaries that she established are vital to her self-care and she no longer looks for certain signs of validation as she once had prior in spaces with White colleagues. Katie stated:

> Personally, I've learned to separate work and home and like I said previously, I was a people pleaser. I wanted predominantly White individuals to like me early on in my professional career. I no longer need that validation. I let my work speak

for itself and I stand on my work. It's no longer personal at work. It's all professional with the exception of the very few people that look like me and have shared experiences, then it becomes personal. But, as I stated, that's very limited so I often feel isolated at work.

Essence of Participants' Experiences

As phenomenology emphasizes the essence of a particular group of people's experiences the interview process and data analysis allowed me as a researcher to learn and understand more about the participants and their experiences with RBF (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). In terms of the essence of their experiences, a few words that came to mind included participants feeling heavy or weighed down, mistrust, and for some, resilient.

Thanks to Dr. Smith's RBF framework, I was able to include participant stress responses in a table in Chapter 5. This included reviewing participant responses by theme. For participants, disappointment, anxiety, and helplessness seemed to be most prevalent when they experienced race-related tensions.

The essence captured after these encounters when participants had the opportunity to reflect on what happened, how they could have responded, and what they would do moving forward illustrated how debilitating perceived race-related stressors could be on RMSAPs. Additionally, an element of the essence of the participants' experiences appeared to be associated with their passion for the work that they do, the students they serve, and how they can serve as advocates for future generations. Participant voices allowed me as the researcher to understand the essence of their experiences with RBF in many different ways and provided rich experiences in navigating the participants' lives.

Summary

This chapter presented six major themes by exploring the lived experiences of seven racially minoritized student affairs professionals through the racial battle fatigue framework. By using CRT and interpretative phenomenological analysis to acknowledge the voices of selected participants, member checks were also completed to determine the accuracy of the findings. Participant profiles and transcripts were individually shared, and all participants agreed with how their voices and experiences were captured in the study.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Future Consideration, and Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis was to explore how racially minoritized student affairs professionals experienced racial battle fatigue (RBF) at PWIs and the impact it had on their health. RBF was applied to the study as it provided a lens to recognize and explore the emotional, physical, and psychological stressors that each SAP had at their PWIs. To understand the patterns and signs of racism experienced by participants, critical race theory (CRT) was chosen as it examined voices and perspectives on how race and racism were navigated in society and at the PWIs (Crenshaw et al., 1995, p. xiv).

This approach was important in guiding the analysis of the research findings. The emergence of these keywords and phrases assisted in identifying the answer to the research questions, which, in turn, assisted with the interpretation of the phenomena. In this chapter, the findings will be connected to the current literature on this topic. Additionally, Appendix D depicts the stress response categories from the RBF framework, which were used to develop a table that associated some of the patterns and keywords with participant responses in the findings.

Interpretations of the Findings

Seven minoritized SAPs were interviewed, and each participant went through a 45- to 60-minute semi-structured interview. Each data source was analyzed using two rounds of coding, analytic memos, and member checking (Gibbs, 2008; Lofland & Lofland, 2006; Saldaña, 2016). Six themes emerged providing findings, which will be

discussed followed by future considerations. In this chapter, I discussed the findings, provided answers to each of the research questions, and asserted implications for professional and institutional practices to support the health and well-being of racially minoritized SAPs.

The findings of this study provided answers to the guiding research questions by exploring how racially minoritized student affairs professionals responded emotionally, physically, and psychologically to race-related stress. The study highlights that whiteness or white-dominant culture at the PWI was pervasive on campus. Participants' reflections emphasized how white-dominant culture often made them second guess whether or not they belonged within the space and whether or not they possessed the capabilities to perform at a certain level. This imposter syndrome feeling or "internal experience of intellectual phoniness" occurs when people believe they are not capable or creative despite evidence of high achievement (Clance & Imes, 1978, p. 241).

Participants' responses were consistent with current research, which associated impostor syndrome with negative behavioral and psychological outcomes including but not limited to anxiety (Gibson & Coombes, 2018; Grayson & Mateo, 2019; Lige et al., 2017. Although white-dominant culture heightened impostor syndrome and resulted in anxiety and frustration for participants, they persisted and developed internal coping responses to counteract the stressful challenges. These findings are consistent with the literature on impostor syndrome while also adding to the literature on experiences of racially minoritized SAPs and RBF.

Race relations and racial tensions conversations on college campuses date back to as early as the 1960s due to the publicizing of student protests (Briscoe, 2022).

This study highlights that participants who supported racially minoritized students identified that racial incidents and stressors were increasingly prevalent in co-curricular settings today (Briscoe, 2022). This included campus activities, and as a result, participants identified the psychological and emotional stressors experienced after they have had the same race-related conversation with different generations of staff and students over the past two decades (Briscoe, 2022, p. 560). Participants expressed that their work included making sure their students were treated fairly in addition to preparing students for the color-blind racism, which SAPs already had encounters with at their PWI.

Moreover, findings from this study demonstrated that participants had a commitment to working with minoritized students even though navigating extra layers of whiteness provided physical and psychological stressors. For example, many racially minoritized SAPs decide on their career path due to their commitment to social justice and their desire to support and advocate for racially minoritized students (Anderson, 2021, p. 361). Many of the participants shared that within their day-to-day responsibilities they consciously worked to support minoritized students, which included acknowledging, supporting, advocacy, and mentoring. This commitment was included in some job responsibilities, but for the majority of the participants, they understood the unique experiences of racially minoritized students and the challenges associated with navigating predominantly white spaces.

Researchers are now seeing the "exhausting institutional practice of performing responsibilities for multiple campus constituencies which includes increased job responsibilities, declining resources, and limited ability to effect change," which is being

coined as being burned through (Anderson, 2021, p. 360). Participants shared that this exhausting institutional practice impeded upon their personal health and professional responsibilities. Many of the participants expressed that increased job responsibilities and limited ability to effect change often led to detrimental health outcomes for their colleagues. Participants further asserted that their RMSAP colleagues who had pursued promotion had experienced different forms of racism. These findings added to the lack of literature that focused specifically on minoritized SAPs' opportunities for promotion while navigating whiteness. Additionally, it is consistent with the literature that stated racial campus climates need improvement as SAPs are experiencing exhaustion in their roles.

The findings of this study identified that PWIs invest time and resources for students when race-related issues are publicized, but they do not establish similar support for their racially minoritized SAPs. Briscoe (2022) found that SAPs' experiences mirrored "national incidents of white supremacy, police brutality, and discrimination against Black and Brown people" (Briscoe, 2022, p. 565). Although the SAPs discussed how they processed the racialized incidents on campus with trusted colleagues, they still had hesitations and reservations discussing it with other colleagues (Briscoe, 2022). White-dominant culture did not make it possible for some White colleagues to understand the impact the events had on their racially minoritized colleagues and the campus community (Briscoe, 2022). These findings from the recent literature are also consistent with the experiences of many of the participants in this study.

These findings further extended the literature, which addressed participants who were often "the only one" person of color in their department amid these race-related

incidents. Participants discussed how it impacted their view of the campus racial climate, heightened stressors they felt after engaging with White colleagues, and having to be the spokesperson for their race. During these encounters, participants expressed feelings of anxiety, disappointment, hopelessness, frustration, and apathy.

These race-related incidents and other encounters while being the only minoritized person provided participants the space to reflect on feeling othered, isolated, and as if they had minimal support on campus (Briscoe, 2022; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Due to the smoke and mirrors of DEI efforts at institutions, although race-related issues are persistent, racially minoritized SAPs often do not speak up due to fear of retaliation. This also includes political backlash, which is also consistent with experiences shared by the participants in this study (Briscoe, 2022; Harper & Hurtado, 2007). By identifying these challenges, researchers have recently begun to identify approaches for the profession.

This has included a shift from focusing on students to understanding how student affairs professionals (SAPs) felt isolated and excluded (Briscoe, 2022; Garcia 2016;). With identifying that there was a gap in the literature combined with the increasing racialized incidents in co-curricular settings for students, further exploration of SAPs' experiences with campus racial climate have become a mechanism for helping prepare SAPs of the future (Briscoe, 2022).

Findings from this study identified specific mechanisms used by participants as they navigated whiteness and emotional, physical, and psychological stressors. These approaches varied based on participants as well as the type of stressors they experienced. One approach that was common for a few participants included focusing on their faith.

Two participants stated that practicing their faith when the race-related stress became overwhelming was their first step to calming themselves. These participants also discussed that practicing their faith with their family members was important as it kept them grounded and allowed them to be open to support even if they could not explain the race-related challenges they were experiencing.

Similarly, participants discussed the importance of their families and being able to be available and fully present with their families. This approach was met with challenge as the stressors experienced at their PWI may have required them to head home from work and seclude themselves from their families. Participants identified that they could not allow the stressors to have them seclude themselves from their families on a day-to-day basis. For example, if one day they left work and could not be present with their family, they identified that they would need to compartmentalize the issue so that they could be well at home the next day. Participants also shared that this required the realization that they could not solve every race-related issue and that issues of race and racism would be a part of their society. Although this realization did not make the encounters better, it helped the participants with their levels of frustration, disappointment, and overall stress associated with encounters.

Although participants discussed the importance of faith, family, and community, they also expressed that isolation was needed and very important. Isolation could include time in the car by themselves or moments of silence to reflect on a situation to make sure they were not internalizing a race-related incident. These are all consistent with the literature that identify social–psychological stress response elements of RBF such as escapism, psychological withdrawal, or acceptance of racist attributions (Husband, 2016;

Smith, 2004; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Some participants used their moment of silence as their time to face the stress head on, and once the moment was over they would readjust their bearings to continue confidently and professionally despite what they may have experienced. This solitude allowed reflection, frustration, and planning. Some of the planning promoted the participants to identify the external resources they needed to manage their emotional, psychological, and physical wellbeing.

The study highlights that participants started to join affinity groups in order to strengthen their connections as well as sense of community and belonging. Participants voiced the importance of healthy nutrition and getting adequate amounts of sleep. In addition to food and nutrition, they discussed how physical activities such as working out and subscriptions to monthly massage were also a part of the systems they developed for their overall health. Participants voiced strategies also consistent with wellness literature that recommends the importance of wellness support professionals such as counselors, therapists, and life coaches to assist with their emotional, psychological, and physical stressors.

Participants provided rich and detailed accounts of their experiences. The six themes, which included Battling Imposter Syndrome, They Ain't Color Blind, Racialized Glass Ceiling, Smoke and Mirrors, Uncovering Psychological Stressors, and Reclaiming Wellness provided findings that were consistent with the literature on racial microaggressions, racial campus climate, racial battle fatigue, and wellness. Consequently, the findings of the study helped to add new literature to the conversation about RBF and minoritized SAPs as it mainly focused on faculty and students. These findings have also provided the answers to the research questions that guided this study.

Answer to Research Questions

1. How do racially minoritized student affairs professionals describe how they respond to racial microaggressions?

RMSAPs in this study had similar lived experiences. Many of them identified that they were either the only minoritized person or one of few minoritized people in their department at Modern University. With their institution being a predominantly white space, most participants experienced racial microaggressions. They encountered racial microaggressions in formal and informal settings and had racial tension with both students and colleagues. National issues of white supremacy and police brutality added a layer of responding to whiteness and microaggressions. This layer typically included large conversations at the PWI about incidents rooted in whiteness and white supremacy. RMSAPs then noted that microaggressions started to seem commonplace over the years as they were having the same conversations at their PWI.

These conversations required most RMSAPs to respond by isolating themselves to decompress as they felt hopeless, helpless, or frustrated after these experiences. Often they responded to racial microaggressions either in a professional manner in a way that maintained decorum or they had a response associated with freezing in the moment to process what was happening. The system of processing allowed them to determine whether or not they should respond at all. An element of CRT identifies that racism is commonplace and difficult to address due to the makeup of our society. Developing responses to racial microaggressions required RMSAPs to be intentional about their personal and professional lifestyle choices and decisions.

RMSAPs identified that they would be responding to these incidents for years to come and realized that their responses to microaggressions would be necessary and different based on the situation. Developing communities on and off campus to talk through the microaggressions and incidents provided RMSAPs with support and comfort. They also identified that these experiences sometimes led to mistrust with colleagues who served as microaggressors and resisted understanding how their whiteness and white-dominant culture was offensive and oppressive.

2. How do racially minoritized student affairs professionals describe how they respond to racial battle fatigue?

The findings in this study revealed that when RMSAPs experienced RBF after a culmination of experiences there was a sense of exhaustion. It negatively impacted how RMSAPs showed up to their professional roles and played a role in RMSAP experiencing another phenomenon known as quiet quit. These experiences increased stressors on their emotional, physical, and psychological health, and it resulted in hesitation about promotion and anxiety about retaliation. Responding to RBF also made RMSAPs begin to think about pivoting into other industries.

RMSAPs enjoyed their work as well as supporting and advocating for minoritized students in predominantly white spaces. This thought about pivoting into other industries or roles that were not student facing included the realization that whiteness would be prevalent in other industries. Although whiteness or white- dominant culture would be embedded in other industries, RMSAPs identified that student affairs work required a greater deal of navigating whiteness. This heightened their responses associated with emotional, psychological, and physical stress. The heightened response was due to the

added responsibilities and race-related stress that exacerbated the stressors and burn out within their roles.

Another response to the RBF that took RMSAPs time to develop was understanding and developing their confidence as professionals. One participant stated that early on in their career being a people pleaser was detrimental to their professional and personal development. Many participants identified that believing in themselves, standing on their work, and being confident in these white-dominant spaces was essential to mitigating self-doubt and any internalized racialized experiences they encountered. Consequently, this also meant that they responded to RBF by being less connected personally to their PWI.

This realization emerged when RMSAPs identified that their White colleagues may not speak to minoritized people outside of work and that their day to day interactions are centered in whiteness. This pervasive whiteness would be a system that required constant navigation for RMSAPs. That is why they ultimately identified that being connected in a way that was focused specifically on their professional identity and less on their personal identity assisted in navigating and mitigating RBF. This also meant that some participants identified that not being promoted although limiting in nature required less exposure and less encounters with racism and RBF.

3. How do racially minoritized student affairs professionals who experience racial battle fatigue respond to the psychological, physiological, and emotional/behavioral aspects of their health?

RMSAPs in this study described many different responses to their physical, psychological, and emotional health after experiencing racial battle fatigue. Some of the

participants associated physical aspects of RBF with their heart pounding, feeling fatigued, sweating profusely, insomnia, and the grinding of their teeth at night. Additionally, the participants shared that their response to their physical health after experiencing RBF required high effort coping. This high level of coping included identifying ways in which to stay physically active. Staying physically active for most participants was described as working out. Participants also shared that eating the right nutritious foods and being intentional with meal selection also assisted with their physical wellness. The response to the emotional and psychological responses to RBF were different from the approaches needed for the response to the physical aspects.

RMSAPs in the study associated psychological aspects of RBF with feeling anxious, defensive, helplessness, shock, disbelief, disappointment, worry as well as apathy. With respect to emotional aspects, which translated to behavioral responses, participants discussed isolation from others, continued commitment to their faith, using therapy, job performance decreasing, and limiting their professional commitments after work hours. Many of the participants identified their responses often focused on the duration of time they would give themselves to sit and process through an encounter.

This intentionality from participants came from an understanding that they still needed the energy and resilience to show up as professionals, although these racial tensions would constantly occur. Moreover, after providing themselves with time and space they decided to stick to their commitment or began to question their future trajectory. Although an initial subquestion focused on response to microaggressors, the findings shared and discussed above combined the encounters with microaggressors and the participant responses.

Reflections on Critical Race Theory

Through each participant interview central tenets of CRT were apparent. For example, each participant discussed how within their experience racism and race-related tensions that caused them stress seemed almost commonplace. Each participant discussed different ways in which color-blind racism was pervasive either within their departments or within communications with their White colleagues at the institution.

Participant reflection illuminated their experiences with microaggressions, and their voices highlighted how social constructs played a role in how they responded to race-related stressors (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Social constructs or social construction as a CRT tenet identifies how race and races are all products of social thought and relations (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Additionally, participant voices highlighted how their multiple identities including race, gender, religion, and nationality were prevalent during race-related tensions, which is in alignment with the intersectionality and anti-essentialism tenet of CRT (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017).

Ultimately, CRT was instrumental in helping me as the researcher develop an understanding of participant experiences with how they navigated racism, race-related stressors, and microaggressions as they described how whiteness was pervasive in their careers as RMSAPs. The discussion will now shift to what the findings uncovered in terms of implications for policy, leadership and practice.

Implications

Policy

In terms of policy, the findings suggested that PWIs work toward having a professional staff population that reflects the student population. Additionally, many departments only have one or very few RMSAPs, although we are currently in a climate following the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) decision that struck down affirmative action and has been followed by a politicized attack on DEI efforts. Identifying how DEI efforts and multiculturalism mitigate whiteness or white-dominant culture is essential to minoritized groups feeling welcomed and invited on their campuses. As participants shared, DEI components in the curriculum, colleges, and departments instead of a singular division for DEI is vital.

Additionally, CRT has also been under a politicized attack due to overwhelmingly gross generalization about what it is and its critique on society. Institutions should implement discussions during onboarding around CRT. This policy implementation should include the importance of race and how it has been constructed in our society. This allows new employees to acknowledge that racism and race-related tensions are very real for RMSAPs and students and that they happen on a day-to-day basis, although those who are White may never know or experience any subtle or overt racialized experiences.

Furthermore, policies that acknowledge RMSAPs and support them as a minoritized asset at PWIs is a finding that emerged from this study. PWIs have support for racially minoritized students, and identifying the gaps and challenges for RMSAPs is important in recruiting and retaining those individuals. It is also more expensive to

replace employees than retain them, and policies that are implemented to support RMSAPs following race-related encounters display a commitment to their health and wellness.

Leadership

From a leadership perspective the findings from this study provided quite a few implications. Again, with the current landscape of DEI in the higher education space after the SCOTUS affirmative action decision, leadership needs to assess their campuses from a critical lens. That lens should include reviewing strategic plans of how and what they would like their campuses to look like in the next 10 to 15 years. This makeup should include what the staff and students will look like and where they will come from during that time frame. In addition to assessing the demographic, decisions about infrastructure and resources geared toward staff wellness and demographics are vital to an institution who embraces multiculturalism or truly diverse thought. Additionally, leadership should be working to merge academic affairs and student affairs in a way that develops institutions and organizations for DEI efforts and tomorrow's fast-paced job market. This type of leadership is transformative at its core and to be transformative, leadership must be connected to inclusion and social justice (Shields, 2011).

This study helped me understand as a leader that there is more I need to learn about diverse identities. As I learn about those populations, it is also important that I make it a priority to advocate for, and one day embed, policies and practices that align with the health and well-being of those who I work with. As a leader providing space and staying up to date with world events that impact all of my staff, colleagues, and students is a difficult undertaking that is very important and can require some of the smallest steps

to ultimately bring about greater institutional change. Being able to influence and motivate others to create any of the changes discussed at our institutions happens when there is trust between leaders and followers, and that should be established early on (Northouse, 2021).

Practice

The findings from this study make it very clear that RMSAPs are having similar experiences as minoritized groups at PWIs. As discussed in the literature and from the perspective of participants, whiteness is difficult to navigate, and although participants identified that they will instead be more professional at work to mitigate their stress, these SAPs spend more than 8 hours a day 5 days a week on these campuses. We have to move from thinking that everyone may be just a bit naive and are well intentioned and have difficult conversations about how our institutions can be more welcoming and take less of a deficit approach to addressing the needs of our minoritized populations.

Furthermore, health and wellness resources are abundant for students on campus. Although employers provide RMSAPs with insurance, their health and wellness should be assisted at their place of work as well. RMSAPs too should have access to on-call therapists and professionals. There should be safe spaces for folks from affinity groups to talk and discuss among themselves everything from social justice issues to ways in which they can develop community professionally and personally.

Trustworthiness

The methods described in Chapter 3 were intentionally implemented and followed the standards and systematic approach of a phenomenological research design. As I conducted the interviews and analyzed the data, I participated a great deal in bracketing, which included journaling and suspending my own beliefs, assumptions, and judgments (Chan et al., 2013). This was also established by the transparency provided to participants and my willingness to provide voice to their narratives both during interview sessions and during the member-checking process that happened after I transcribed and coded their interviews. Within the interview process there was a semi-structured interview that included open-ended questions. Through bracketing and active listening, as a researcher I opened the opportunity for participants to share as they needed and how they needed while confronting my biases as they may have shown up during experiences that I heard that may have mirrored my own (Chan et al., 2013).

Limitations

Limitations to this study include the fact that it was an interpretative phenomenological analysis, in such the generalizability of the rich experiences of these RMSAPs was limited. Moreover, this study explored the lives of seven RMSAPs which included six Black participants and one Latina participant. The participant demographic was also majority female, and that is a limitation as there could have been more space for male perspectives with respect to the phenomenon. Additionally, this study was conducted at one institution so the findings are limited and not generalizable across all PWIs. Conducting the study at different institutions with more RMSAPs who identify as

both male and female could allow for more implications and further insights for PWIs in particular.

Conclusion

This study explored the rich experiences of seven racially minoritized student affairs professionals (RMSAPs) who experienced racial battle fatigue (RBF) and the impact it had on their health at a predominantly white institutions (PWI). As the landscape of our society and higher education changes, the conversation continues to evolve with respect to our racial campus climates. RMSAPs need to be a vital part of that discussion as they are experiencing heightened stressors in their job with white colleagues, white students, white supremacy, and whiteness on campus and the national news.

The work from Dr. William Harris centered on RBF provided a great framework in which to categorize participant experiences, while critical race theory (CRT) provided the elements to understand and make sense of whiteness, racism, and the unique voices of color from participants. Those unique voices of color humbly allowed the study to capture their reflections on stressors, trauma, recovery, and healing. For some participants it was affirming of how far they have come while acknowledging there is much road to this journey that awaits them and their passion for student affairs work, which includes advocating for minoritized students.

This study extended the research that currently focuses on RBF and the experiences of faculty and students. It also breaks some ground as literature on RMSAP is starting to slowly emerge. We must continue to question the systems at play within our society and how they impact healthcare, finances, housing, and education. Higher

education for students and RMSAPs alike is an opportunity for social mobility. With the politized attacks on DEI and affirmative action the gap between the haves and have nots will widen and social justice issues such as racial battle fatigue on college campus will become more rampant.

Transforming our institutions includes enacting change focused on critiquing power dynamics and systemic structures that reinforce inequality and discrimination. For RMSAPS, transforming our institutions include showing up in historically white spaces, centering themselves, their well-being and doing the work. Racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue have proven to be as normal as race is socially constructed and in such causes public health and social justice issues for underrepresented communities on college campuses.

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Appendix A

Interview Consent Form

Please read and sign both copies of the consent form. You keep will a copy for your own personal records and I will keep a copy for my own personal records. Should you have any questions regarding this study, you can contact me at (856) 813-0076 or you can email me at JuliusGrayson1@gmail.com.

I ____, give my full consent to participate in Julius Grayson's research study on responses to racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue of racially minoritized student affairs professionals at a predominantly White institution. I fully understand I will be answering questions regarding my own personal lived experiences at Modern University. I also understand that my participation in this study is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw myself from the study at any moment without penalty or retaliation. I also know that my information will be discarded upon the completion of the study. To practice confidentiality and protect my identity, Mr. Julius Grayson will use a pseudonym and will secure my responses in an undisclosed location on his laptop. All records will be deleted upon the completion of the study. If I would like a copy of the finding of the study, I can email Mr. Julius Grayson at JuliusGrayson1@gmail.com. I understand that my participation in this research will require answering interview questions in one session that will take approximately 45 minutes to an hour. I may refrain from answering any question at any time during the interview without facing any repercussions.

Signature ______________________

Appendix B

Audio Recording Consent Form

You have already agreed to participate in a research study conducted by Mr. Julius Grayson. We are asking for your permission to allow us to audiotape the interview as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study. The recording(s) will be used for analysis by the research team. Specifically, as the principal investigator, I will be transcribing the audiotape and then looking for emerging themes and patterns that come out of the interview. The recording(s) will include your name and the answers to the interview questions. However, your identity will not be used during the analysis of data. The recording(s) will be stored in a locked file on my personal laptop that requires having a password to access information. The recording will be retained until the end of the study. Once the study is completed, I will be discarding the recordings. Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Signature ____

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Dear _____.

My name is Julius J. Grayson and I am currently a 4th-year doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership program, with a Higher Education track at Rowan University. Dr. James Coaxum is my Chair for this study and I thank you for agreeing to be a part of my research study. The purpose of this study is to learn about the responses to racial microaggressions of racially minoritized student affairs professionals at a PWI. Your participation in this study is voluntary and I am not being paid by Rowan University or any outside agency to conduct this study. This study will consist of a semi-structured interview. During this interview, I will be asking you questions regarding your experiences as a student affairs professional and racial microaggressions at Modern University. At the conclusion of the semi-structured interview, you will have the opportunity to review the findings before they get published.

Tape Recorder Instruction

If it is okay with you, I will be taping/recording our conversation. The purpose of this is so that I can obtain as much information as I can and be able to be attentive to our conversation. All of our conversations will be confidential. I will in no way be discussing our conversation without your permission to anyone outside of my dissertation. You will also be provided with a pseudonym to protect your identity. This interview could last between 45 to 60 minutes. As I am learning about your experience, you are in control of the direction of the interview. Although, each question will be used, your responses will produce more probing questions that will aid with answering the research questions.

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee:

Questions:

Student Affairs Professional Role

1. Could you describe your current role and responsibilities as a student affairs professional at this institution?
2. What does a typical day in your role look like?
3. How would you describe your experiences working at a predominately white institution as a racially minoritized professional?

Experiences with Racism

4. Subtle acts of racism can include verbal, behavioral, or environmental shaming. Sue et al. (2007) believed that these occurrences happen in commonplace and could be brief and could communicate negative racial insults towards racially minoritized people.
5. Tell me about a time that you personally experienced or witnessed any intentional or unintentional forms of racism in your role here at the university.
    a. How have these experiences impacted you professionally?
    b. How have these experiences impacted you personally?
6. Can you describe if you have experienced any stressors or strains because of your race in your role as a student affairs professional?

Racial Microaggressions

7. As a student affairs professional, if you have had stress-related experiences because of your race, can you share what happened in that experience?
8. Can you describe an experience in which you felt uncomfortable due to words and /or actions within your role related to your race?
    a. How about any emotional, psychological, and/or physical reactions you may have had during or after that experience?

b. Please describe how you felt when this experience was happening.
c. What thoughts did you have about the experience?
d. What did you do immediately afterward?

9. Can you share how often these types of experiences happen within your role?
10. Do you often have emotional, psychological, and/or physical reactions after these types of experiences?

Racial Battle Fatigue

11. You had an opportunity to discuss your reactions to the experiences you have had in your role. Do you think that distressing racial experiences impact one's emotional, physical, and/or psychological health?
    a. If you do think so, please explain how.
    b. Would you say the description you provided is applicable to your personal experience?
    c. If so, please explain how you react to the impact on your emotional, physical, and/or psychological health.
12. As a racially minoritized student affairs professional, how does your role affect your well-being and health? How does your well-being and health affect your role?
13. Do you think these distressing racial experiences impact the responsibilities of racially minoritized student affairs professionals in their roles?
14. What advice would you give to other racially minoritized student affairs professionals who may encounter distressing racial experiences in their roles?
15. Do you think the institutional culture contributes to distressing racial experiences at the institution?

16. What institutional policies and practices do you think could be implemented to better support racially minoritized student affairs professionals? Do you think there any institutional policies and practices that could be implemented to address distressing racial experiences?

Closing Questions

17. What do you think are the important questions I should be asking with respect to this topic? Is there anything else you would like to add?
18. Please indicate a pseudonym/code name that may be used in further information generated from interviews conducted for this research study.

Appendix D

Stress Response Categories

Participant Psychological, Physiological, and Behavioral Stress Responses

Participant name	Psychological stress response	Physiological stress response	Behavioral stress responses
Adele	*Emotional* Anxiety Defensiveness Burnout	Fatigue	High-effort coping Isolation from others Limits commitments after work hours
Exx	*Emotional* Anxiety Worry Fear Helplessness Burnout Defensiveness	Tiredness	Isolation from others Continued commitment to faith
Katie	Emotional/Biological Sleep Disturbance Anxiety Helplessness Fear/Disappointment	Fatigue Grinding of teeth Insomnia	Therapy

Participant Name	Psychological Stress Response	Physiological Stress Response	Behavioral Stress Response
Soar Sister	*Emotional* Frustration Disappointment Disbelief Fatigue	Tiredness	Continued commitment to faith Therapy Limits commitments after work hours
Becky	*Emotional* Anxiety Shock Disbelief Burnout	Heart Pounding Increase perspiration	High-effort coping
MPH	*Emotional* Frustration Disappointment Apathy Burnout Defensiveness	Tiredness	Isolation from others Limits commitments after work hours
Maleone	Worry Apathy		High-effort coping