INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS AFFECTING THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL

DEVELOPMENT OF UNDERREPRESENTED COLLEGE STUDENTS:

PERSPECTIVES OF ADMINISTRATORS

by

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INSTITUTIONAL BARRIERS AFFECTING THE ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF UNDERREPRESENTED COLLEGE STUDENTS: PERSPECTIVES OF ADMINISTRATORS

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This dissertation examines the perspectives of middle- and senior-level higher education administrators at a predominantly white institution (PWI) who provide minority-based programs and services that support underrepresented college students. This research aims to identify the key institutional systemic barriers that create challenges for the administrators in their effort to support underrepresented college students. Often underrepresented college students face academic and social challenges in their pursuit of obtaining an education; their experiences often differ from their white peers. Underrepresented college students attending PWIs are at greater risk of academic failure and adapting to their learning environment when institutional barriers are present and diversity and inclusion are not institutional priorities to promote an inclusive campus climate. Subsequently, administrators who support these students through their programs also encounter systemic barriers that create challenges. This task can be daunting for administrators at PWIs, often characterized by concerns induced by racism and the senior institutional leadership practices which influence systemic practices and policies. Using a qualitative semi-structured interview method, this study seeks to analyze the data gathered from 10 middle- and senior-level administrators interviewed at the University of

Pittsburgh, a public research and PWI. The inquiry focused on the perspectives in narrative form. A qualitative analysis of interview results and pertinent literature review support identifying the key findings, themes, and interpretation. The data gathered in the study is analyzed using critical race theory (CRT), a theoretical framework and tenets of counter-storytelling and the permanence of racism. The qualitative study revealed the following emerging themes: institutional financial challenges; implications of existing silos; equitable resources and treatment are not always equal; social challenges create systemic discrimination and implicit bias; checking boxes and formality are common practices; administrators' perspectives regarding racism as a factor; and senior institutional leadership and support they provide. The seven emerging themes from the data analysis reveal that racism and the influence of senior institutional leadership were tied closely to each of the themes. The seven themes also answer the three research questions. The data gathered is not intended to generalize all PWIs, underrepresented college students, and administrators.

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PREFACE

In memory of my late father, Charles Edward Redd, and my late mother, Mamie Redd, a phenomenal woman - thank you for instilling in me the value of education and the importance of striving for personal success. Without the foundation you instilled in me, obtaining my educational goals could not have been possible. Despite the past three years that presented many challenges, life changing events, and self-doubt, because of your love, affirmation, guidance, and nurturing spirit you provided throughout my life, I prevailed and persevered – thank you! Although you could not witness this milestone physically, I know in spirit you celebrate with me.

To my dissertation committee, thank you for your support, guidance, and interest in my study. I will always be grateful to each of you for allowing me to engage, explore, and develop as a learner and practitioner.

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To my husband, Darnell Perry, thank you for standing by my side when it was most difficult. Because of your shared wisdom, you helped me to believe that I could not only achieve but conquer. You spoke into existence my achievement when I could not see the end–BELIEVE. Most important, I thank my Lord and Savior for He is mighty! God's grace, mercy, and provision allowed me to pursue and accomplish a lifelong goal. Without my strong faith and belief in God this would not have been possible, nor could I have triumph through the challenges and obstacles I faced – Psalm 46:10 and Philippians 4:6-7.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Waren (2016) wrote:

For the second year in a row, no people of color were nominated for the top honors in America's entertainment industry. In a country that is 37% people of color, we have no nominees. In an industry where 46% of moviegoers are people of color, we have no nominees. In an industry where we have recognized superstars giving top-notch performances, we have no nominees. . . . The problem in this instance is not who is starring or who is watching. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, the voting body of the Oscars, is 94% white. The voting body is not representative of the audience nor the performers. Leadership at universities look a lot like the leadership at the Oscars. Both institutions are 90% to 95% white. Both are largely invitation-only affairs (make no mistake, social networks matter for every faculty appointment). Both are prone to recreating their own biases. Both are self-regulating and quite insulated from external challenges. Do we expect either of these institutions to change without a challenge? (paras. 1, 2, 3, 6)

As racism is apparent in our society from Warren Waren's assertions about the 2016 Academy Awards, it is equally apparent within higher education, specifically PWIs. At PWIs today, we find levels of hierarchy within the institutional systems where racial ethnic minority administrators and staff are not in key positions of authority or power to influence decisions or change. I further assert that race and racism are the common threads entrenched within our

educational systems made up of policies, practices and procedures (Milner, 2008). As higher education administrators work to provide programs and services for underrepresented college students, specifically students of color, creating a culturally diverse and inclusive academic environment can be daunting as administrators encounter systemic barriers that produce challenges. Creating a culturally diverse and inclusive academic environment often requires the implementation of institutional change. However, change can be not only complex but often creates challenges (Brown, 2012). It can also be difficult to build positive relationships and interaction between racially and ethnically diverse student groups (Bollinger, 2012).

Further, racially and ethnic minority students often find it difficult to assimilate at PWIs because of cultural differences, values, and learning styles (Love, Trammell, & Cartner, 2010). Within higher education, PWIs are defined as institutions with a White student enrollment of 50% or higher (Brown & Dancy, 2010). Historically, underrepresented college students attending four-year public colleges and universities, specifically PWIs, have had difficulty achieving academic and social success within their college environment when the necessary resources and support systems are not available to remove barriers. For PWIs, to best serve underrepresented college students, it is most important to understand this population to determine the most effective way to support their academic and social development.

Although many studies have been conducted to examine the experiences of underrepresented college students at PWIs and the institutional barriers that create challenges affecting their academic and social development, unfortunately, there are limited studies or current literature examining the personal or professional perspectives of higher education administrators, specifically at PWIs, providing minority-based programs and services to support

underrepresented college students. This research study investigated and examined the perspectives of administrators, specifically at PWIs, who provide resources and services through minority-based programs designed to support underrepresented college students.

To conduct this study, the critical race theory (CRT) framework was used to guide and analyze the data, making use of the two tenets of counter-storytelling and the permanence of racism. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) state the following regarding counter-stories:

> Counter-stories serve at least four functions as follows: (a) They can build community among those at the margins of society by putting a human and familiar face to educational theory and practices, (b) they can challenge the perceived wisdom of those at society's center by providing a context to understand and transform established belief systems, (c) they can open new windows into the reality of those at the margins of society by showing possibilities beyond the ones they live and demonstrating that they are not alone in their position, and (d) they can teach others that by combining elements from both the story and the current reality, one can construct another world that is richer than either the story or the reality alone. (p. 36)

In this study, two counter-stories are used to capture the experiences of two administrators and to draw upon some of the key emerging themes from the study. Second, I seek to examine race and racism within the PWI environment using the permanence of racism as a lens. In this study race and racism are often referenced together because of the association that issues of racism generally occur based on one's race. Paluzzi (2016) states race is a social concept differentiating people by their cultural, physical, and social identities. Racism is defined as a system that creates discriminatory acts that perpetuate inequity and unfair treatment based on race. In higher education, the permanence of racism may be used as a lens that examines the

structural impact. Using the permanence of racism as a lens, "it is important to consider how well intended institutional processes and procedures can potentially promote racism when working toward improving an institution's plan for diversity and inclusion" (Hiraldo, 2010, p.55). The permanence of racism, a guiding concept, is used to further uncover, identify, and analyze the existence of institutional racism and the underpinning issues, which otherwise may not be disclosed. While the data from this study cannot be used to generalize, my intent as a researcher is to help close the gap in the current research studies and literature and to begin a new dialogue of investigation regarding the administrators' perceptions about the systemic barriers they have encountered that affect their efforts to support underrepresented college students.

1.1   PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

The problem of practice which I investigated focused on middle- and senior-level administrators and institutional barriers affecting the academic performance and social adjustment of underrepresented college students. Underrepresented college students, specifically African American and Latinos, continue to encounter difficulty gaining admission into PWIs and graduating. Subsequently, PWIs often fail in meeting the needs of these students. Kezar and Eckel (2003) state "a central tenet of higher education is to serve as the pathway for personal and professional advancement, yet colleges and universities continue to disproportionately provide that opportunity to some groups of students over others" (p.1). Some higher education senior leaders are attempting to create a more inclusive campus climate to promote the academic and social development of underrepresented college students. Unfortunately, institutional racism,

implicit biases, and inequitable treatment perhaps reflected in institutional policies and structure create challenges in removing barriers to create a positive experience for this student population.

Particularly, relevant to African American and Latino college students attending PWIs, there are multiple barriers, both individual and institutional, which hinder students from acclimating within their academic environment and graduating. Systemic barriers identified in the literature include factors such as socioeconomics, racism, inequalities, academic preparedness, microaggression, stigmatization, and labeling. However, other institutional barriers include policies, procedures, or situations which can cause a more significant disadvantage for underrepresented populations (Ashcraft, 2009). The issues are further compounded when students are unable to establish connections with institutional communities, administrators, and faculty of color (Cardiel, 2012). This is to suggest that barriers are manifested when institutions are unable to identify the importance of inclusiveness and provide the resources, services, and support to meet the needs of others to promote success and excellence. It is crucial to understand how barriers may cause one not to advance academically or prevent access to resources such as career development and potential employment opportunities (Tate, et al., 2015). Such considerations are important precisely for those student populations faced with barriers. If barriers create roadblocks to access and resources, it is not advantageous for the students to matriculate at the institution due to the propensity for failure (Kezar & Eckel, 2003).

Barriers impact underrepresented college students as this population adjusts to the learning environment to achieve positive academic, social, and socio-economic outcomes. Underrepresented college students experience pressure to succeed when they do not feel a sense of belonging and are without the support and resources needed to thrive within the academic setting. Without an institutional support system, these students risk permanent

disenfranchisement. Ultimately, as students face their challenges, higher education administrators and staff also face adaptive challenges to create a culturally rich environment conducive to inclusiveness and learning. As we consider the engagement of faculty and the students' development, nonetheless, "the overall professorate plays an important role in the academic achievement of underprepared students and the college students of color—a pivotal and crucial role in both their social and academic success" (Marbley, Bonner, Williams, Morris, & Ross, 2013, p. 91).

Despite the efforts of some PWIs to remove institutional barriers, underrepresented college students continue to persist at a lower rate. When barriers are not adequately addressed, it is difficult for these students to accomplish successful outcomes relating to academic achievement and social development. As administrators better understand the key risk factors which create barriers, they can develop effective interventions to enrich the learning and social experiences of these students. Marbley et al. (2013) found the following:

> The disconnection for most African American students is not the lack of diagnostic assessment and placement or academic preparedness, but PWIs lacking sensitivity and responsiveness to individual differences, special needs among diverse learners, culturally responsive learning strategies, and addressing the barriers to learning set forth by the tenets of developmental education. (p. 108)

1.2   PROBLEM AREA

It is predicted that based on the type of school an underrepresented college student attends during their K-12 academic years, it is an indication of the challenges a student may encounter in college (Milner, 2015). Facing such challenges makes it difficult to navigate in college, which can cause achievement gaps. For students with experiences differing from most others around them, unfortunately, acclimating in the environment and graduating can be even more difficult. Although the graduation rates across all colleges and universities are increasing, unfortunately, many institutions are not closing the graduation gap between White students and underrepresented racial ethnic minority students (Camera, 2015). The National Center of Education Statistics states that by 2022, student enrollment will increase by 7% among Whites and Asians, 26% among African Americans, and 27% among Hispanics. It is noted that African American and Hispanics are at a higher poverty level than the other student groups (Morales, 2014).

As demographics and student populations become more diverse on college campuses, understanding cultural competency will become vital for educators in the areas of learning, effective teaching, and greater preparation to address the achievement gap among student populations (Roekel, 2008). For instance, White and Asian students achieve college degrees at a higher rate of 20 percentage points above Latino and African American students (Tate, 2017). Schneider, Martinez, and Owens (2006) noted:

> For Hispanics in the United States, the educational experience is one of accumulated disadvantage. Many Latino students begin formalized schooling without the economic and social resources that many other students receive, and schools are often ill-equipped to compensate for these initial disparities. . . . Initial disadvantages continue to

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accumulate and result in Latinos having the lowest rates of high school and college degree attainment which hinders their chances for stable employment. The situation of Hispanic educational attainment is cause for national concern. (p.179)

African American and Latino undergraduate college students historically have struggled socially and academically in ways that other racial and ethnic student populations have not. These student populations also face countless challenges coping with psychological distress (Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002). Love et al. (2010) believe that racial ethnic minority college students find it difficult to assimilate at PWIs because of cultural differences, values, and learning styles. As confirmed by researchers, underrepresented college students attending PWIs historically have not been afforded the same privileges to fully benefit from learning opportunities (Kinzie, Gonyea, Shoup, & Kuh, 2008). Hurtado and Carter (1996) deem that racial consciousness and retention constructs (including a sense of belonging) are factors also associated with underrepresented students' persistence. In a study conducted by Jones et al. (2002), the experiences of racial ethnic minority students to include African American, Asian-Pacific American, Chicano/Latino, and Native Americans attending a PWI were documented. Jones et al. also found that many of students interviewed, particularly, African Americans felt that diversity and inclusion were not an institutional priority. The Chicano/Latino and Native American students experienced overt racism and reported feeling unsafe. The Asian-Pacific American students, however, identified tension between White students and students of color.

1.3   PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study examines middle- and senior-level administrators regarding their perceptions, role, and institutional mechanisms that affect their work relevant to removing barriers to support the underrepresented students of color. The research uncovers systemic institutional barriers affecting the academic and social development of underrepresented college students attending a PWI, and what administrative leaders are doing to create systems to promote the academic and social development of these students.

1.4   INQUIRY QUESTIONS

These inquiry questions guide the research of this study:

1.   What are the perceptions of administrators about the work they do to support underrepresented college students?

2.   What institutional systems, services, and programs are supporting the success of underrepresented undergraduate college students?

3.   What creates challenges for administrators as they work to support underrepresented undergraduate college students?

1.5   MY ROLE IN THE PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

As an African American female, it is difficult to pretend that race, racism, inequality, privilege, and prejudice do not exist in higher education. My interest in the problem of practice stems from my personal experiences as a student of color and middle-level administrator working at PWIs. I have experienced how race, racism, power, and privilege influences systems, policies, and behaviors of dominant groups while ignoring and disregarding underrepresented populations and those not having privilege. By engaging in the research, this study is an opportunity to explore further not only how barriers affect underrepresented students of color, but also the perceptions, practices, and mechanisms that affect administrators' work to support these students. As student demographics continue to change, the trend will affect how PWIs support underrepresented populations. The shift in student populations is an opportunity for PWIs to address the underlying issues relevant to race, diversity, and equity to create a more culturally rich and responsive learning environment. It is my interest to become a change agent to transform institutional systems, practices, and policies to foster greater inclusiveness and engagement for underrepresented college students, administrators, staff, and faculty of color. My advocacy will not transform an entire system; however, giving a voice to systemic institutional complexities can aid in establishing new systems and policies to help senior leaders identify new opportunities to improve campus-wide inclusiveness by breaking down barriers allowing administrators opportunities to help underrepresented college students gain greater access, persistence leading to a holistic academic experience.

1.6   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INQUIRY

As the research study seeks to understand and examine how systemic institutional barriers affect the efforts and perception of administrative leadership to serve underrepresented African Americans and Latino undergraduate college students, I intend to gain a greater insight through counter-storytelling to better identify how the permanence of race influence systems and policies of PWIs. Also, the intent is to give a voice to administrators to learn about their experiences as they address the barriers they encounter in order to implement institutional changes relevant to the social engagement and academic support of underrepresented students.

There is a gap in the literature referencing the experiences of middle- and senior-level administrators in their efforts to serve and support underrepresented student populations at PWIs. Further, the review of literature did not identify specific institutional policies or mandates holding institutions accountable for supporting and serving underrepresented college students. The research findings and final analysis provide the evidence for institutions to consider evaluating their current organizational structure, institutional policies, and practices to determine new practices to create a more inclusive environment. Based on the findings and analysis, my goal is to present recommendations to improve further the effectiveness of how administrative leadership at PWIs address barriers to foster a more inclusive climate to promote better academic performance and social adjustment for these students.

1.7   METHODS/APPROACH

A qualitative method such as interviews is the primary instrument to collect data for the entire study. The protocol consists of semi-structured open-ended questions to drive the interviews. Interviews were conducted in-person and by telephone with 10 middle- and senior-level administrators at one PWI. The feedback gathered from the interviews was coded and categorized to generate the final analysis based on the findings.

According to Patton (1980), the interview is often used to discover those things we cannot observe, and the data gathered allows for capturing the perspectives of those being interviewed. The primary purpose of conducting interviews is to capture a precise meaning, experience, and perspective of the participants from their points of view. For this study, using interviews was preferred over questionnaires because of the opportunity to gain greater insight from the participants' perceptions. Interviews are powerful because of the ability to gain greater in-depth information from the interviewees' voices thoughts, feeling and perceptions gathered (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

1.8   BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH SETTING

The University of Pittsburgh established in 1787 is a state-related research university. The University is in Western Pennsylvania, with its main campus in Pittsburgh, and four other campuses located regionally throughout western Pennsylvania. The University has a predominantly White administrative leadership, faculty, staff, and student population.

1.9   LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The focus of the study was to examine the perspectives of administrators at PWI who support underrepresented college students. The emphasis of this study was to understand the phenomena of the problems as outlined. This study did not focus on the perception of underrepresented college students or seek to interview this population. By selecting only one PWI to participate, this limited the sample size and participation in the study. Further study is needed with other administrators and perhaps other PWIs to gain different perspectives and insight. However, the study design provided the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon rather than gaining a general and global perspective.

1.10   CONCLUSION

The objective of this chapter is to explain the problem of practice focused on the examination of institutional barriers that affect the academic and social development of underrepresented college students. This population is central to the problem and can experience having limited access to the predominant social culture and exposure to elite environments potentially resulting in academic failure of college students attending PWIs.

This research study is grounded in a qualitative methodology to research the inquiry and gather data by using a semi-structured open-ended interview to interview middle- and senior-level administrators at the University of Pittsburgh, which is the primary setting for conducting the study. Although this study examines the barriers and its implications, this study does not focus on the perception of the students but explores the perceptions, experi-

ences, and work of middle- and senior-level administrators and how they address systemic

institutional barriers.

2.0   BACKGROUND LITERATURE

"Not everything that is faced can be changed at once, but nothing can be changed until it is faced" (James Baldwin, as cited by Wilson, 2004, p. 24). The literature review examines systemic institutional barriers. In examining institutional supports to benefit underrepresented college students, no consensus theory exists. However, the notion that institutional support and organizational structures can influence both negative and positive outcomes associated with barriers to academic preparedness and social adjustment is evident in the literature. Although more racial ethnic minority students are attending college today, persistence and success remain a challenge for this population of underrepresented college students. For this study, underrepresented is defined as minority groups, to include African Americans and Latinos identified by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Ocampo, 2017). Baker and Robert (2012) confirm that academic success for students of color must begin before starting college through preparedness. Therefore, developing better systems will improve access to resources and increase student success among first-generation college students of color from low socio-economic backgrounds (Brachman, 2012). This is an opportunity to understand further the imbalance caused by barriers and identify recommendations to improve institutional systems and campus climate.

2.1   INTRODUCTION TO LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, social stratification has defined not only socioeconomic status in society but also the types of schools students attend and the quality of education they receive (Milner, 2015). Altbach, Gumport, and Berdahl (2011) noted:

> From 1890s until the 1960s, many states operated dual systems of higher education – one for Black students and another for White students. Although desegregation of these systems was implied by the Brown v. Board of Education decision by the Supreme Court (1954), meaningful steps toward that end did not take place until after the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1965. (p.131)

> According to Vivian (2017), 16% of the undergraduate population is representative of

racially ethnic minorities, to include African Americans and Latinos. This population is specifically sought out by institutions purposely to increase diversity (Barron, 2010). John and Stage (2014) report that according to the 2013 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) report, it is expected that the number of racially ethnic minority student populations attending higher education institutions will continue to increase significantly. However, "despite improvements in the pipeline, there is evidence that higher education is not prepared to educate the diverse students who come to its institutions" (Altbach et al., 2011, p. 476). When diversity is deemed as an institutional priority, there is significant opportunity to promote inclusion and student success (Altbach et al., 2011).

Historically underrepresented college students attending four-year public colleges and universities have had difficulty achieving academic and social success when barriers are present. For the context of this study, barriers can be defined as impediments preventing access. Barriers are manifested when institutions fail to provide the resources, services, and support to meet the

needs of others to promote success and excellence in the areas of academic achievement, social mobility, and economic progress. Underrepresented college students historically have struggled socially and academically in ways that other racial-ethnic college student populations have not. Ashkenas, et al. (2017) confirm that according to the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, students coming from elementary and secondary institutions with large percentages of minority student populations face equity issues associated with not having experienced teachers, advanced courses, high-quality materials, and adequate facilities prior to entering college. Such circumstances place underrepresented students at a disadvantage.

Underrepresented college students are often faced with the persistence of disparities because of institutional barriers. Because of such factors, it is essential to identify some of the specific systemic institutional barriers affecting underrepresented college students and assess the organizational structure, types of support services, resources, and programs being utilized to promote academic excellence and the social adjustment increasing retention and attainment. Caplan and Ford (2014) build upon the concept that institutions evaluate policies and initiatives to change the perception that underrepresented students of color often have about the institutions they attend and their self-value.

2.1.1 Implication of stigmatization and labeling

According to Vivian (2005), "students having an inability to achieve academically and socially are often labeled as 'at-risk.' At-risk college students are defined as those who are socially, financially, or academically underprepared or under-supported and particularly need mentoring in college" (p. 336). These students are less likely to transition successfully into adulthood and achieve economic self-sufficiency. It is unfortunate that "at-risk" college students are also

stereotyped. Steele (1997) mentioned that negative stereotypes could affect any group, especially African Americans who often are hindered and perceived as not having the ability to excel academically in many scholastic domains. Hartwick and Kubisiak (2014) believe that when a student is aware that they are stereotyped or labeled, this additionally creates negative stereotypical performance and behaviors among these students. Furthermore, Steele and Aronson (1995) note that based on stereotype threat theory, people associated with a group that has been stereotyped have a tendency to act out in ways which define them by such stereotypes.

Often within the academic environment, labels are also placed on individuals perceived as having less value than others (Becker, 1963). Unfortunately, labeling influences one's perception of race, color, and how we view others (Alter, 2010). Although labeling may appear to be trivial, labeling can have adverse implications and can be harmful, causing issues with self-esteem, motivation, and demeaning opportunity of rising above expectations (Dilea, 2010). Alter (2010) also maintains that labels not only influence our perception based on race but how we perceive others. Because labels influence how we perceive others, there is a tendency to form negative stereotypes affecting one's self-esteem. Nadal, Wong, Griffin, Davidoff, and Sriken (2014) confirm that there is also an association between self-esteem and racial microaggression. More specifically, those encountering racial microaggression within their academic environments experience a greater decline in self-esteem and self-worth. Milner (2015) defines "racial microaggression as brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (p.158).

To elaborate further, the consequences of labeling and stigmatization create a negative cycle which diminishes the opportunity for engagement (Crinson, 2007). Students of color more

often are labeled as academically underprepared and require remediation at a significantly higher rate in comparison to White and other student populations at PWIs (Marbley et al. 2013). Love et al. (2010) support the idea that PWIs find it challenging to build a supportive community to support the learning of racial ethnic minority students. On the other hand, underrepresented students often lose interest when they are misunderstood, or their interest is not captured by the institution to include administrators, faculty, other students (Milner, 2015).

2.1.2   Social adjustment and acclimation

Higher education has made significant progress in admitting African American students; however, it has failed to institute the concept of engagement or inclusion for all students (Soto, 1999). Because of an expected increase in diverse racial ethnic populations by 2025, institutions must develop new initiatives to welcome diverse students and cultures. The lack of social engagement and acceptance at some universities and colleges resulted in isolation and mistreatment of some students of color (Minikel-Lacocque, 2013).

Further, "the response of underrepresented college students to the social, cultural, financial, and intellectual stressors they face in college often are perceived as passivity and apathy by faculty members having little understanding the circumstances confronting these students" (Vivian, 2005, p. 337). Communication regarding self-identify is a critical factor for African American and other minority students; it helps to establish a sense of understanding and belonging. In a study by Minikel-Lacocque (2013), six female and male Latino students were interviewed at a PWI over a 10-month period; students reported experiencing racism, discrimination, and mistreatment from other students on campus. The study provided insight in exposing that social adjustment associated with racism is not isolated to any one group of people.

Such disengagement places underrepresented students of color at higher risk for academic failure. Q. Allen (2010) explains that overt racism exists and is blatant. However, covert racism is a form of a microaggression that usually goes unnoticed and students of color cannot distinguish or identify true racism.

When diversity and equity (which overarch cultural competence) are not practiced or are not part of the institution's mission statement and strategic plan, the impact can be devastating, causing students to experience deliberate mistreatment, discrimination, low self-esteem, and isolation at their respective institutions, inside and outside of the classroom. Hope, Chavous, Jagers, and Sellers (2013) studied 324 male and female African American students at large universities in the Midwest region. The results showed how disengagement causes low self-esteem hindering one's ability to learn and reach academic success, which can put students at-risk psychologically. It is evident that disengagement increases the difficulty of acclimating (Baker & Robert, 2012).

In a study conducted by Caplan and Ford (2014), the researchers interviewed 57 first-year college students of color to examine the progress of diversity and inclusion at four higher education institutions based on the perception of how the students were accepted, supported, and encouraged by administrators and White students. The study also assessed benefits and identified key problems to establish solutions to optimize inclusion. The findings confirmed that institutions should evaluate existing institutional policies to implement new initiatives to develop enhanced programs and services to foster greater diversity and inclusion to change discriminatory perceptions and minimize the feelings of exclusion first-year college students of color experience which affects their self-esteem. There is a valid reason to inquire about what institutions are doing to educate White students about racism and discriminatory views.

As social adjustment is a perceived barrier, Park (2014) also studied interracial friendships and racial climate within student organizations. The data analysis showed that of the 28 selected institutions studied in the research, 80.5% of White, 26.4% of Black, 14.8% of Asian-American, and 7.9% of Latino students were involved in student organizations that were dominated by their own racial/ethnic groups. This study suggests that participation in organizations and clubs encourage interracial student and transactional engagement which may stimulate academic performance, retention, and increase graduation rates.

As engagement is deemed essential for promoting academic and social development, theorists associated with Vincent Tinto's work validate that a student's departure from college is associated with their inability to connect with the institution. Critics of Tinto's theories agree that it is vital to assess the students' connectedness and engagement with the institutions they attend (Braxton, Doyle, Hartley, Hirschy, & Jones, 2013). In a study by DeAngelo (2013):

> the results indicate that in terms of retention to the second year, it is not so much where a student lives during the first year but the fact that students who live on campus are more likely to be engaged in outside of the classroom activities such as discussing course content that has a relationship with retention (p. 63).

The interaction and engagement that underrepresented college students have on campus with other individuals is vital to their academic and social development. When students are able to engage, it is an opportunity for them to further build upon their sense of belonging.

2.1.3 Academic preparedness and retention

Underrepresented college students who attend PWIs frequently have problems not only acclimating socially but also academically. Marbley et al. (2013) state "In fact, research even

further suggests that regardless of levels of academic preparedness, a disproportionate number of students of color who manage to get through the doors of PWIs often find themselves ill prepared to thrive on these campuses" p. 92). Subsequently, when this population is admitted to selective colleges and universities and begin their academic experience, without proper guidance and direction, they make inappropriate choices resulting in a mismatch. According to Calleros (2006), mismatch occurs when students do not have access to information to determine their ability to do well in assigned classes or academic programs. As a result, the ability to sustain academic success can become overwhelming. Therefore, "it is imperative for colleges and universities concerned about the academic success of students of color to recognize that academic success or failure is part directly related to unmet cultural and development needs" (Marbley et al., 2013, p.92).

Many institutions are facing challenges to identify best practices to retain and graduate underrepresented students at a higher rate considering the ever-changing demographics (Morales, 2014). For an institution to further advance the academic success among underrepresented students, it is suggested that emphasis is placed on developing self-efficacy, evaluation of performance, and identifying support (Morales, 2014). Helping students to develop their ethnic identities is also a desirable characteristic to support their ability of achievement (Pizzolato, Chaudhari, Murrell, Podobnik, & Schaeffer, 2008).

2.1.4   Institutional support

Love et al. (2010) reference that because minority students included as underrepresented students tend to learn differently from the majority student populations, without considering inclusive learning approaches associated with pedagogies and methodologies, this may hinder the delivery

of instruction and teaching methods to teach underrepresented students. The teaching approach that takes place in the classroom helps these students make gains in developing their academic and intellectual skills. The educational methods used by instructors to impart information are also necessary for teaching underrepresented students of color. It is believed that student involvement and engagement in campus life can lead to students transitioning with greater ease into the institution and excelling academically and socially.

Laskey and Hetzel (2011) support the notion that underrepresented college students with the right motivation and soft skills to pursue a college degree can succeed. Based on their research to identify factors influencing the success of underrepresented college students, the analysis showed: students who scored higher in conscientiousness and agreeableness were likely to utilize tutoring services and achieve a higher GPA. To help underrepresented, at-risk, and first-generation undergraduate college students advance in college-level work and acclimate to the academic environment, the utilization of academic support services such as developmental courses, tutoring, and developing relationships are vital. Liu (2011) likewise supports the importance of developing policies and strategies that focus on improving access as it relates to retention and academic performance for underrepresented and first-generational college students. Equally, as retention and intervention are put in place to support students, the utilization of new strategies and approaches that connect academic and career pathways are crucial. According to Ayala and Striplen (2002), the use of a career introduction model as an early intervention and interactive approach supports students, specifically first-generation students in their academic development and career preparation.

When such retention and intervention strategies and models are created that align with curricular and co-curricular programs and services, underrepresented African American and

Latino college students have a higher propensity to become more involved in social and civic engagement, earn college degrees, and gain economic advantages. Because some underrepresented students of color lack the necessary skillsets, it is imperative for administrators and faculty to identify and understand the needs of these students and to teach them and foster success.

Minikel-Lacocque (2013) advocates that to support underrepresented struggling college students, institutions develop new initiatives through retention and wrap-around programs to welcome underrepresented college students. The utilization of retention-based programs and strategies are very valuable in the learning experience for these students. Such initiatives for increasing retention include institutionalizing mentoring programs geared to assist students with acclimating to their academic environment.

Because it is challenging to reach underrepresented and at-risk college students, mentoring programs can lead to improved outcomes for these students. In agreement with Straw (2014), mentoring is vital to help underrepresented college students excel academically and socially. To support this claim, President Barack Obama's 2014 report, Increasing College Opportunity for Low-Income Students, indicated there was a 4% increase in the college graduation rate for those with a one-on-one mentor. Also, it should be noted that mentoring provides a lifetime opportunity for self-reflection and decision-making for students (Vivian, 2005). Vivian confirms: "Mentoring also is acknowledged to be of particular benefit to college students at-risk for failure or withdrawal" (p. 336). Hope et al. (2013) conclude that there is a correlation and repeat patterns between self-esteem and academic achievement.

2.1.5   Institutional leadership

Hurtado, Alvarado, and Guillermo-Wann (2012) note that "as the student population of higher education becomes increasingly diverse, understanding the different processes that can help students succeed becomes more critical" (p. 3). Numerous other factors contribute to the likelihood of retaining underrepresented college students such as institutional characteristics and perceptions affecting the chances of retention (Chang, Cerna, Han, & Saenz, 2008). Helping to understand the different processes to help students succeed requires more significant support from institutional leadership. To foster greater support for students requires the visible observation of transformational change and collaborative engagement from senior higher education leaders (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). As senior leaders seek to embrace diversity and inclusion to address racism, CRT is critical in this process (Hiraldo, 2010). If racism is addressed to promote diversity and inclusion, the tenets of CRT can be utilized to expose further how privilege and oppression create many disparities within the institutional systems (Hiraldo, 2010).

Looking at racial climates and implications for institutional transformation, Harper and Hurtado (2007) conducted a multi-institutional qualitative study utilizing focus groups at PWIs over a 15-year period across five campuses. After an audit at one of the PWIs, it was revealed that racial issues did exist. Further, after interviewing staff of which 88% were of racial ethnic minorities, they indicated they were aware that minority students were at a disadvantage and racial segregation existed. However, staff and administrators were apprehensive to disclose what they observed for fear of harsh repercussions they could face. Harper and Hurtado (2007) concluded that based on the study, it was revealed that more transparency was needed within the academic environment to identify the existence of race-related issues further. Also, problems of exclusion, formality, and marginalization were reoccurring issues of concern as well.

Hurtado et al. (2012) emphasize that educators having direct contact with students have a responsibility to ensure students feel a sense of belonging. Students often have discernment about feeling welcomed and included. Harper and Hurtado (2007) note, "likewise, faculty and staff in academic affairs, student affairs, multicultural affairs, and other units on campus should be challenged to consider their roles as accomplices in the cyclical reproduction of racism and institutional negligence" (p. 21).

Because institutional leaders tend to normalize and have an invested interest among the majority student population, this often place students of color at a more significant disadvantage. Until professionals are cognizant of the impact of their deliberate actions affecting the campus climate, the ability to achieve social justice is impossible (Patton, McEwen, Rendon, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007). Therefore, it is vital that the actions of the administrators be reflective of institutional needs to address the challenges faced by underrepresented college students rather than based on their personal intentions, which may not be consistent with the primary focus of the institution to support these students (Kezar & Eckel, 2003).

Kezar and Eckel also make the following recommendation:

> Leaders at institutions with more developed diversity agendas might focus on assessing campus efforts to date; refining their strategic plans; developing supportive off-campus networks; creating a culture that continually examines data to challenge prevailing beliefs and set new directions; and evaluating the curriculum. (p. 6)

Further, when institutional leaders decide to make diversity initiatives one of the competing priorities and implement appropriate systems to support such initiative, then they can advance their efforts for greater inclusion (Kezar & Eckel, 2003).

2.2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As the United States continues to strive to reclaim its position in leading the nation in higher education serving a large diverse student population, to include underrepresented students, there is an urgency to increase degree attainment and diversity (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013). For institutions to best retain underrepresented college students, promote an academic environment of inclusion and diversity, and advance learning opportunities for all student populations, it requires the collaborative efforts and commitment from administrators, staff, and faculty to assess the institutional climate, learning environments, educational practices, and student outcomes. The results of an assessment will further inform policies and practices to enforce the necessary changes to further the efforts of institutional advancement. It should be noted that at many PWIs, assessments have focused primarily on students rather than the administrators and institution. (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013). Also, "Very little research has been conducted on two and four-year institutions that offer broad access to students in their regions, particularly in features of their climate for diversity and the experiences of their student populations" (Hurtado & Guillermo-Wann, 2013, p. i).

As institutions have tried to even the playing field for marginalized students, unfortunately, the attempts have not been successful. Marginalized students continue to encounter negative experiences at a higher percentage in comparison to White students (Allen, Q., 2010). Kozol and Lewis' research (as cited by Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004) confirmed that, because of race, institutions in the United States continue to implement discriminatory practices by not granting equal access to education and other opportunities to all students.

Furthermore, Yasso et al. (2004), citing several studies (Lawrence and Matsuda; Smith, Altbach, and Lomotey; and Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso), argue that "students of color remain severely under-presented in historically White colleges and universities, and the few granted access to these institutions often suffer racial discrimination on and around campus" (p. 1).

Based on the literature, several systemic institutional barriers have been identified which relate to the study. For this research I used a qualitative research to conduct semi-structured open-ended interviews with middle- and senior-level administrators at a PWI to address concerns and perceptions of administrators on how systemic institutional barriers affect their work and practices to support the academic and social development of underrepresented African American and Latino college students as the subgroup and gain greater insight into the current organizational structure supporting these students.

For this study, the transformative paradigm guided my research and provided the prototypical lens based on my beliefs about in equitability, equity, and cultural competence which historically have created levels of stagnation upon people of color in the United States relevant to educational attainment. My interest in the research topic and selected transformative paradigm stems from my consciousness as an African American female educated and having served as a middle-level administrator working at PWIs. According to Mertens (2007), "the transformative paradigm provides such a framework for examining assumptions that explicitly address power issues, social justice, and cultural complexity throughout the research process." (p. 212).

To direct the research, as a component of the conceptual framework, I chose critical race theory (CRT) to help focus the study. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) define "critical race methodology as a theoretically grounded approach to research that (a) foregrounds race and

racism and (b) challenges the traditional research paradigms, texts, and theories used to explain the experiences of students of color" (p. 24). It is noted that CRT emerged from the work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman in the 1970s because of their discontentment with the advancement of racial reform in the United States (Hiraldo, 2010). However, CRT introduced in higher education in 1994, is a framework that has been utilized by scholars to analyze and critique research and practice (Ladson-Billings, 2005). Solórzano and Yosso (2001) agree that CRT in education begin from the belief that race and racism are endemic. Therefore, CRT helps to gain greater insight into the experiences of the students in the literature and examine how higher education administrators address systemic institutional barriers to promote academic and social development for underrepresented African American and Latino college students attending PWIs. The significance of CRT is that it provides the lens to examine and uncover how race, racism, and inequities influence institutional systems and practices regarding inclusivity and a sense of belonging among underrepresented students. The utilization of CRT serves as a practical analysis to further study how PWIs can become more inclusive rather than superficially diverse.

Yosso and Solórzano (2007) reference that CRT initially focused on civil rights legislation regarding Black vs. White. CRT, utilizing a transdisciplinary knowledge base, guides the research in a better understanding of the effects of racism, sexism, and classism on people of color. Yosso and Solórzano reference that in identifying and exploring social inequalities at higher education institutions, CRT is an appropriate lens to properly explore the following three areas: research questions, teaching approaches, and policy recommendations. M. E. Allen (2015) documents that according to Ledesma and Calderón (2015), CRT in education includes the following two academic areas: K-12 and higher education. However, in higher education, there are three common themes: colorblindness, selective admissions policy, and campus race climate.

Although CRT does not consist of a set of theoretical ideas, there are identified themes referred to as tenets (Taylor, 1998). According to Hiraldo (2010), the following five tenets of CRT can be used to uncover and scrutinize the existing social inequities that have impact on institutional efforts of diversity and inclusion in higher education: counter-storytelling; the permanence of racism; Whiteness as property; interest conversion; and the critique of liberalism. For the research study, I have selected the first two tenets, counter-storytelling and the permanence of racism in exploring institutional barriers and the campus climate at PWIs through the CRT framework. In agreement with Hiraldo, the use of counter-stories in analyzing PWIs climate provide administrators of different racial-ethnic backgrounds and at various institutional levels a voice to tell their narratives involving marginalized experiences. On the other hand, Hiraldo states the following regarding the permanence of racism:

> The permanence of racism suggests that racism controls the political, social, and economic realms of U.S., In CRT, racism is seen as an inherent part of American civilization, privileging White individuals over people of color in most areas of life, including education. (pp. 54-55)

2.3   CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

CRT is utilized in the field of education to examine the various educational systems and the traditional claims made concerning the following: objectivity, meritocracy, color-blindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity. Critical race theorists believe that these traditional claims set forth serve as an opportunity for the privileged, dominant groups to perpetuate their self-interest and power (Solórzano, 2001). Stovall (2005) also confirms that CRT examines many groups and

individuals at various levels to discover the effect of racism, institutional, and systemic phenomenon. As CRT is used as a lens to examination race and racism, it also allows for further assessment to study how race and racism affect people of color directly and indirectly (Yosso, 2005).

The conceptual framework for this study involved CRT as the framework to understand how race and racism are embedded within the institutional system and influence actions and behaviors.CRT guides the analysis and interpretation of this study. Parker and Lynn (2002) outline the following three goals of CRT:

> CRT has three main goals: 1) to present storytelling and narratives as valid approaches through which to examine race and racism 2) to argue for the eradication of racial subjugation while simultaneously recognizing that race is a social construct; and 3) to draw important relationships between race and other axes of domination. (p. 10)

Through the CRT lens and the two tenets of counter-storytelling and the permanence of racism, this study focused on the concepts of racism and institutional leadership, which are the underlying influencers of financial resources, institutional silos, equity, discrimination, implicit bias, diversity and inclusion that create systemic barriers ultimately affecting administrators who provide services and support to underrepresented college students through minority-based programs at a PWI. To overcome such barriers, leaders should reassess how institutional cultures, policies, current practices, procedures, and infrastructure affect administrators and seek to make positive changes.

2.4   CONCLUSION

Social forecasters predict that ethnic, racial, and cultural minorities will continue to be the majority in the United States. Because of this demographic phenomenon, institutions should be more deliberate about implementing methods of retention to aid with attrition often associated with the lack of cultural competence, academic preparedness, and social adjustment. For institutions unable to recognize the importance of removing barriers, the consequences may cause student failure both academically and socially.

Administrators face the challenge of not only understanding the barriers but how such barriers may influence their work and best practices relevant to student success and a favorable campus climate fostering inclusiveness. Scanning both their internal and external environments to assess the complex dynamics in which institutions are facing is essential to institutional transformation. This is an attempt for institutions to create a paradigm shift reshaping how they embrace and support underrepresented students by developing missions, strategies, policies, and support programs which focus more on student-centered educational outcomes being the ultimate objective to support and create a sense of belonging for underrepresented African American and Latino college students.

Further, this chapter focuses on how systemic institutional barriers not only affect underrepresented college students but the impact on higher education administrators at PWIs. It is suggested that institutional support and better systems can influence the academic and social development of underrepresented students. A qualitative study was utilized to conduct semi-structured open-ended interviews with middle- and senior-level administrators at a PWI to address concerns and perceptions of administrators on how systemic institutional barriers impede their work and practices to support the academic and social development of underrepresented

undergraduate African American and Latino college students as the subgroup and gain greater insight into the current organizational structure supporting these students.

Because CRT framework contributes to inclusivity and diversity in higher education, to direct the research CRT is the lens and part of the study to examine how higher education administrators address institutional barriers impeding their work and practices to support underrepresented students. Counter-storytelling and the permanence of racism are the two tenets selected from CRT to obtain narratives from diverse administrators and explore underlying issues relevant to race, racism, and inequalities. CRT serves as the lens to also view racism and analyze the University of Pittsburgh to identify underlying issues which otherwise may not be uncovered.

The review of literature addresses systemic institutional barriers such as race, racism, microaggression, stigmatization, labeling, academic preparedness, and sense of belonging, and the implications affecting underrepresented students of color. The literature review also provides insight regarding the role of administrators and the importance of institutional support for this population to ensure students excel academically and socially within their learning environment, specifically at PWIs. An extensive search specifically on the perceptions and experiences of administrators who serve underrepresented college students was conducted; unfortunately, limited literature was found. This suggests that there are gaps in the literature regarding the perspectives of middle- and senior-level administrators who are responsible for supporting and serving underrepresented college students at PWIs. Literature was found relating PWIs and the overall college experience and services and programs to support these students.

3.0   METHODS

3.1   EPISTEMOLOGY

In chapter 2, the transformative paradigm guides my research and provides the prototypical lens based on my beliefs about inequality, equity, and cultural competence which historically have created levels of stagnation upon ethnic minority people of color in the United States relevant to educational attainment. Although my research does not directly capture the experiences or stories of underrepresented college students which Mertens (2015) references as important regarding engaging the voices of concealed communities traditionally unrecognized or excluded, some of the literature review cited in this study by other researchers captures the students' experiences and tells their stories through the studies conducted and noted in the research. The experiences and perception of these students further my desire, as a researcher, to interview higher education administrators as the participants of this study to seek insight into the phenomenon of their experience at PWIs and learn how these institutions are addressing barriers and the campus climate.

In agreement with Mertens (2015), by conducting interviews with administrators, this is an opportunity to identify some of the critical insights from administrators about what contributes to the social oppression of students within the institutional system. Also, the interviews will lend to the engagement of counter-storytelling to amplify the voices of

administrators whom we may otherwise not hear from and to add significant meaning and context. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) state that counter-storytelling can further expose and analyze a difference in views and experiences. Williams (2004) also indicates that to create new narratives requires the view and experiences of individuals outside of the dominant group or population.

Mertens (2012) indicates that the transformative paradigm, a metaphysical framework, examines how underlying issues and barriers simultaneously can create privileges and disparities for individuals or groups based on economic status, immigrant status, and race/ethnicity. While a study that focused directly on students' experiences from their points of view would be valuable, this study is taking a different approach, mindful that although the voices of the students are not represented, it is important to study the administrators doing the work at PWIs. As the study was conducted, the transformative paradigm also helped to address the inequalities and injustices. Mertens (2012) reiterates that "the transformative paradigm focuses on the strengths that reside in communities that experience discrimination and oppression on the bases of their cultural values and experiences" (p. 804).

As this research also examines cultural competency and its implications, Mertens (2012) confirms that cultural competency often used to foster positive outcomes, is vital for those working within the transformative paradigm. Cultural competency is defined as "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or amongst professionals, and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations" (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989, p. 49). Furthermore, cultural competency viewed as a critical disposition allows the researcher to provide an accurate account of the realities existing within the culturally complex communities (Mertens, 2012). Also, it is

crucial to recognize the implications that power differential may have on the availability of resources which can influence or change one's quality of life. Without some form of transformation, it is difficult to improve one's quality of life (Mertens, 2012).

According to Kezar and Eckel (2002), "unfortunately, institutional leaders and policymakers have neither the experience with institutional transformation nor a solid empirical literature base upon which to draw. There is little meaningful data to advance an understanding of the process of large-scale or transformational change" (p. 296). As we look at institutional transformation, Blessinger (2016) references that as higher education has a greater paradigm shift towards inclusivity, it requires repositioning from an elitist and exclusive mindset to a democratic and inclusive mindset.

Also, "transformational change forces institutions to adopt new conceptual frameworks, beliefs, and meanings. Institutional leaders should intentionally design strategies that facilitate new change, leaving behind old ideas, assumptions, and mental models" (Eckel & Kezar, 2003, p.51). Blessinger (2016) believes that because of human and civil rights reforms there should also be a greater demand to create and ensure consistency in promoting inclusive learning environments. Such efforts may require some form of institutional transformation; however, "transformation is not revolutionary change, and most likely will occur through incremental processes over significant time" (Eckel & Kezar, 2003, p. 40).

As Blessinger (2016) references the importance of having a democratic mindset, he validates that educational institutions have a significant role to strengthen democracy as there is a concern for creating a more inclusive educational environment. Creating an enriched inclusive educational environment requires reorienting the institutional mission, vision, and values which align with the core demographic principles (Blessinger, 2016).

Therefore, focusing on the CRT tenets of counter-storytelling and the permanence of racism will allow for taking an in-depth examination in analyzing the experiences and perception of middle- and senior-level administrators as they encounter systemic institutional barriers in their efforts to create a sense of belonging, promote academic success, and the social development for underrepresented college students.

3.2   RESEARCHER'S REFLEXIVITY

As the researcher, I approach this study implementing the recommendation of the American Psychological Association (2003), which is a change agent to address issues of racism, prejudice, bias, and oppression while attempting to establish a positive rapport with administrators. Using such an approach served as an opportunity to establish a dialogue. Downey (2009) confirms that the process of dialogue allows for exploring issues, misconceptions, common interests, and developing measures to address problems. As I examined barriers, administrators' perceptions, and organizational structures, I sought to identify implications and recommendations to promote inclusion, a sense of belonging, and interlinkage to support administrator efforts to promote the academic and social development of underrepresented college students.

As an experienced administrator in higher education, I have worked at four colleges and universities including small to mid-sized institutions, complex university systems, and multi-campus/public land-grant institutions. During my tenure, I have provided administrative oversight and led new initiatives and strategic direction in the areas of institutional advancement, development, multicultural affairs, academic affairs, student affairs, and student services. The actions created included the development of comprehensive programs relevant to leadership,

orientation, peer monitoring and tutoring, career preparation, personal counseling, and team building. Each program administered promoted academic excellence, self-esteem, and student interaction and engagement. I have developed assessment tools to measure institutional outcomes germane to student performance, retention, attrition, satisfaction rate, and campus climate.

Working with diverse student populations in both undergraduate and graduate academic programs has enlightened me to understand the importance of how higher education shapes all students. Specifically, working with African American college students and students of other ethnic minority groups, I have observed these college students have trouble excelling academically and socially within their college environment when cultural-conscious programs and services are not readily available.

3.3   INQUIRY APPROACH AND METHODS

For the qualitative study, I used a semi-structured interview design to examine current institutional practices for serving underrepresented college students to promote academic achievement and social development. The interview allowed for an in-depth investigation and exploration of multiple sources relevant to institutional structures, practices, and engagement. According to Patton (1980), the interview is often used to discover those things we cannot observe, and the data gathered allows for capturing the perspectives of those being interviewed. Kvale (1996) reiterates that interviewing is a way to capture and obtain clarity of what interviewees may say. Also, interviews allow for capturing a greater depth of understanding of the participants' personal stories, perceptions, and experiences. The interviewer can pursue in-depth information on the topic. For this study, using interviews was preferred over

questionnaires because of the opportunity to gain greater insight from the participants' perceptions. Alshenqeeti (2014) agrees that interviews are compelling because of the ability to gain greater in-depth information and granting the interviewees' voices, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions to be gathered.

3.4   SAMPLE POPULATION

The population selected for this research study includes middle- and senior-level administrators who have worked in some capacity with underrepresented college students at the University of Pittsburgh in various academic programs and institutional settings to include: engineering, athletics, diversity and inclusion, student affairs, student services, academic advising, health sciences, medical school, and information and computer sciences. To limit bias and to obtain varied perspectives, the chosen population also included female and male administrators from diverse ethnic/racial backgrounds.

A purposeful approach was used to assist with identifying a racially ethnic diverse sample of administrators to gain greater depth and obtain variation in their experiences, and perceptions. It was the objective to interview administrators who were part of the institution for at least two years or longer who could speak in-depth about systemic complexities.

The researcher identified the populations for the study at the University of Pittsburgh assisted by a University of Pittsburgh administrator. A population consisting of 21 administrators was identified, and the administrators were contacted by email (Appendix J) to inform them of the research study and to seek their participation in the study.

The sample consisted of 10 (48% of those initially contacted) administrators who agreed to be interviewed (Appendix A, Table 1). Each administrator received a copy of the interview protocol to familiarize him or her with the questions before the interview. Nine interviews were conducted at the University of Pittsburgh and one by telephone. To ensure that the identity of the administrators remained anonymous, identifiers were not used in notes and transcriptions.

3.5   RESEARCH SETTING

The University of Pittsburgh's main campus was the selected institution for the study. The university is a PWI serving a small underrepresented racial ethnic minority student population. The University of Pittsburgh is a large, public co-educational doctoral granting institution part of a system of state institutions in an urban setting in the heart of Pittsburgh. The University is compositionally diverse, with an overall enrollment in 2017 of 28,000 students and an undergraduate enrollment of over 18,000. The student population composition consists of an African American population of 952 (5.0 %) and Hispanic population of 530 (2.8%). About 67% of the students attending the Pittsburgh campus come from within Pennsylvania (College Factual 2017).

In the 1998 report written by Jack Daniel, the former vice provost for Academic Affairs suggested the University should rethink how they recruit and nurture black students based on low performance and graduation rates. Historically, the University has experienced challenges in retaining and graduating underrepresented ethnic minority students. According to the Daniel Report, titled A 21st Century African American Student Agenda: A Matter of Higher Expectations, from 1985 to 1992, 17 percent of African American first-year students graduated

in four years in comparison to 39 percent White students and 20.6 percent of other minority student populations that graduated in four years.

Considering the history of the University of Pittsburgh, the institution is an ideal setting for this study to examine how the institution has progressed since 1998 in its efforts to increase the graduation rates among underrepresented populations by breaking down barriers to promote academic excellence and social development among these populations. This setting allowed for further investigation to assess how administrators have done at the University of Pittsburgh, how they are doing now, and how they view the university's senior leadership efforts to support these students.

3.6   DATA SOURCE

Rubin and Rubin (2012) emphasize that using interviews allows for engaging with those with knowledge of, or experiences with, the problem of interest to explore the experiences, motives, and opinions of others and learn to see the world from perspectives other than their own. The interviews serve as the primary source of data collection not only to gain insight into the participants' perspective but also to gain a better understanding of the University's organizational structure in serving and educating African American and Latino students. The protocol for the study includes a semi-structured open-ended interview. The interview protocol engaged the administrators in dialogue and in-depth conversation.

The protocol allowed participants to give narratives of their perceptions and share their stories of how institutional barriers affect their work and efforts to support underrepresented college students. Gaining greater insight was an opportunity to identify systemic trends, themes,

differences, and variations within the academic units and university-wide, which may lead to additional data collection for further in-depth research to making recommendations for programmatic improvements to promote the academic and social development of underrepresented college students attending the University. Out of the 10 participants, five were senior administrators, and five were middle-level administrators (Appendix A, Table 1).

3.7   DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis was to gain a full scope of the study to understand the perceptions of administrators as they relate to institutional barriers and challenges affecting their work to serve underrepresented students. Through the study, data was systemically collected and coded through semi-structured interviews, analytic memos, and anecdotal notes. A recording device and note-taking were utilized to capture the conversations. I used Excel software to assist with coding; however, manual efforts were used to transcribe and organize the data to identify key findings and emerging themes and patterns. Mertens (2015) references that the process of transcription is part of the data analysis process.

A balance of open coding was used to organize and sort the data using descriptive labels. Saldaña (2016) references that coding is a cyclical act and often includes first-cycle and second-cycle coding. Additionally, "coding requires that you wear your researcher's analytic lens. But how you perceive and interpret what is happening in the data depends on what type of filter covers that lens and from which angle you view the phenomenon" (pp. 7-8).

By using transformative change, coupled with CRT, as the framework, and the two tenets of counter-storytelling and the permanence of racism to guide the study, theory contributed to the

analysis in understanding the perspective of administrators and the overall relationship between underrepresented college students in a PWI setting. CRT played a significant part in investigating how race influences behaviors within PWIs. Finally, CRT contributed to the analysis to examine how both students and the institution are affected by the barriers, view situations, and seek solutions that will benefit the students.

The tenet of counter-storytelling in the study gained both historical insight and stories from racial ethnic administrators and identified champions of diversity and inclusion. The stories provided a better understanding of both the university and the underrepresented college students. Utilizing counter-stories helped to examine the overall institutional climate and provided a voice to the marginalized experiences encountered by administrators, specifically those of color at the PWI. In agreement with Hiraldo (2010), "utilizing counter-stories in analyzing the climate of a college campus also provide opportunities for further research in ways which an institution can become inclusive and not simply superficially diverse" (p. 54).

3.8   LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODS AND APPROACHES

Jamshed (2014) believes interviewing is the most common format of data collection in qualitative research. However, when using interviews, it requires more time for analysis and interpretation, which can be perceived as a limitation (Wengraf, 2001). Another challenge during the interview was establishing a level of trust with the administrators and reassuring them that their responses would be kept confidential. It was important to capture their truths without placing them in an awkward position due to the questions being asked. The interview process itself can be complex and difficult to follow. Therefore, "It is necessary for the researchers to

remember that they are there to "listen" not just speak" (Alshenqeeti, 2014, p. 41). Alshenqeeti also emphasizes the importance of the interviewer establishing a relaxed environment for the interviewee to feel at ease and speak openly.

There were limitations identified in this study. Because the research study focused on one PWI, this created limitations regarding which academic areas and units to select to participate in the study. The study had a diverse pool of administrators; however, the study was limited because of the sample size. In a future study, a larger sample size to include other PWIs and other areas within the institution would extend the findings and create greater opportunity for variation to expand the analysis and uncover further findings. Another limitation of concern related to some of administrators wanting to be heard; unfortunately, because of time constraints to conduct the interviews, the administrators may not have shared all their experiences and perceptions fully. At various times in speaking their truths, some administrators appeared to express emotion while others appeared uneasy in speaking their truths. All administrators were reassured that the responses they provided would be kept confidential. It is believed that the responses provided were honest and accurate. More extensive interviewing could focus on extended counter-stories.

3.9 CONCLUSION

As three specific inquiry questions are derived for this study, the epistemology guiding the research was through a transformative paradigm which approached the research process through a lens of culture power and social justice to improve academic and social development for underrepresented students through the efforts of administrators at a PWI. The qualitative semi-

structured interview was the data source to conduct this study and gather data for coding and

analysis. As the researcher, I sought to examine systemic institutional barriers, understand the

perceptions of administrators, and assess organizational structures from an unbiased perspective

through a CRT lens.

4.0   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

As previously noted, this study examined middle- and senior-level administrators regarding their perceptions of how institutional barriers create challenges and affect their efforts to serve and support underrepresented college students at PWIs. The study sought to document the perspectives of administrators, specifically individuals responsible for the support and success of underrepresented college students.

In this chapter using CRT as the lens to conduct the research study, counter-storytelling is a form of representation used as a strategy to give a voice to administrators who may not otherwise be able to share their stories and gain insightful perspectives. Permanence of racism is a guiding concept used to analyze and examine institutional racism. In gathering the interview responses and telling of stories, the administrators in this study share some of their experiences and insight about institutional challenges that shape their perception and views. Additionally, the administrators give insight to this main interpretation: institutional leadership and racism are key challenges to serving underrepresented college students. Through the analysis of the 10 interviews, I demonstrate how senior institutional leaders may not view the areas that serve underrepresented students as institutional priorities.

In this chapter, I analyze and discuss the primary emerging themes discovered in the 10 interviews conducted with administrators. Tables 2, 3, and 4 (Appendices B, C, and D) provide analysis of each of the research questions, showing the open coding cycles of breaking down the

raw data to conduct the analysis. After a thorough review of the data, seven primary themes emerged:

1.   institutional financial challenges;

2.   implications of existing silos;

3.   equitable resources and treatment are not always equal;

4.   social challenges create systemic discrimination, and implicit bias;

5.   checking boxes and formality are common practices;

6.   administrators' perspectives regarding racism as a factor; and

7.   senior institutional leadership and support they provide.

The primary themes were determined based on the salience and frequency highlighted by at least two or more administrators interviewed. Although the interviews generated more than 150 pages of transcription, for this study, responses were selected that enriched and supported the identified themes. Some responses were edited for sustenance that added to this study.

As Banks (2013) confirms, critical race theorists believe that implications of racism exist within all aspects of education. The framework of CRT and two tenets—the permanence of racism and counter-storytelling—inform the three research questions and build upon the analysis of how race, racism, and the hierarchical power of senior institutional leadership (which is predominantly White) influences the system, creating systemic inequities. These inequities dominate many of the emerging themes that have an impact on the university, more specifically minority-based programs, and those administrators who provide support to underrepresented college students.

Using the chronicles of two administrators (an African American female and a White male), the next section presents counter-stories that set the stage for the examination of racism in

higher education, specifically at PWIs. The administrators share their personal stories through their experiences from two different perspectives. The two stories reflect not only the position of a person of color who associates with being oppressed but also a White person otherwise engaged in supporting anti-racist practice to foster access for students of color. In summary, the stories uncover the effects of racism and discriminatory practices. The African American female administrator speaks from a space of how race and racism in a predominantly White academic environment are prevalent. She gives a report of her experience as it relates to racial discrimination and not feeling valued as a person of color. Also, her story provides a framework legitimizing how racism and implicit bias results in acts of rejection and disengagement. On the other hand, the White male administrator through his story shares his concern regarding underrepresented students and the importance of support and engagement from higher education institutions.

The experiences of the two administrators are examples of what administrators, staff, and students experience as people of color, and the experience of other White administrators who support and advocate for students of color. Drawing from CRT reveals evidence of the permanence of racism and post-racial discourse in higher education and further supports the research study and the conceptual matter of the study examining the overarching systemic factors of racism and persistence of senior institutional leadership influencing institutional practices and norms at PWIs. The following counter-story provides a narrative demonstrating how marginalized students encountering social inequities are unable to thrive academically if the university does not become more inclusive or engage in greater efforts of community outreach to provide resources and educational opportunities for the students. Further, the counter-stories, which are verbatim, draw out some of the themes that emerged from the study.

4.1.1   African American female administrator's story

I do not see myself as being diverse in this inclusion concept they have going on; I do not see that. I think it is apparent that it is about race, so you say what race you are - I am black. For me to be included, you must want me to be involved. I think sometimes we use these terms that sound nice. We don't want to get down to the fact that as a Black staff member, I still walk into meetings sometimes looking and feeling like I am being dismissed. My White counterparts do not consider my opinion because there are more of them than there is of me. Sometimes I am labeled because I work with black and brown students. So, that is the only thing I can address in my professional career because I do that. If you look, our offices for our minority program in our office suite are in the back hallway of the suite and not with the other professional offices with our White counterparts. As a Black woman, when I look at diversity and inclusion, I also look at what it means to look at race.

I must look at myself and put myself first in this environment I do not fit in. I do not always fit into this environment at the University because the campus climate is not always willing to allow me to fit in. So, the students I serve are not fitting in. I have the same reality as they have. I think that sometimes you know people instead they might do different microaggressions that they are saying different jokes that are inappropriate, or colleagues have never been around people of color because they have been able to be around their group of people their whole life. It is very different to navigate that terrain when you are somebody of color because you have a double sword, right! I am a woman and a black woman. I must walk differently, still speak my mind but understanding sometimes I am walking into a teachable moment I should have, if I walked in anger because of the ignorance it would not make a change.

4.1.2 White male administrator's story

I grew up in North Braddock, and I do not know if you are from the Pittsburgh area or not? When I was growing up, it was probably a 60-40 African American and White population. I grew up in a relatively diverse neighborhood and kind of thought it was like that everywhere; unfortunately, you learn it is not. It is probably now, and you can move these numbers up, I am guessing it is probably now more 80-20 African American to Whites.

I mean with the steel mills closed and then all that stuff, I grew up in an area like I went to Penn State as an undergrad and then came here as a graduate student, I had a profound belief in making the world better for everyone. I went to Catholic schools my entire 12 years. I was very blessed that my parents could afford that, and we were Catholic, so we got discounts because the Braddock and North Braddock school districts were not very good. Moreover, my mom who was big on education knew that, and you know so I was always concerned the way back that a lot of these kids did not have the option to go to a Catholic school were going to school districts already deemed not suitable. I still see that today, you see the Wilkinsburg school district and the concerns going on there. You do not hear those same concerns in places like Upper St. Clair and Mount Lebanon, and so I worry about that, and it is a big concern. I think that is part of where my commitment initially came from was just from where I grew up.

My perception is that if you are an academically gifted student in any minority class, the university wants you. They will go through many things to get you here and to help you succeed. I worry again from where I grew up from being poor. I live in the city of Pittsburgh now, and I worry about the students not academically gifted. If you are somebody that grew up in Braddock or Wilkinsburg, you are an average student, and that may sound prejudicial because I am

assuming they are African-American mostly. I worry about those kids coming in because they are at such a significant disadvantage. We do not do enough.

Now what I would do would not be popular with many people, but I would get these kids together as a group and say hey we are admitting you. You do not meet the standards we expect, because we believe in you and want you to succeed; you must do a, b, c, and d for us. I would have required tutoring sessions. It is okay to tell somebody who did not quite make it; however, I do not think any less of you, and we want to help you.

Several years ago, when a senior administrator was still here at Pitt and that was long before your time, but his core is a part of my standard of care. He had a private meeting of everybody together that would help make a difference. I went to the first meeting, and he stood up and said that he only wanted folks of color to be on that committee. I walked out and never went back because I was insulted, and I was deeply hurt. I think you must look at people's souls, you must ask them questions, and you must know do they believe.

4.2   EMERGING THEMES

The previous counter-stories reflect upon racism and institutional leadership. Racism and institutional leadership are the common threads which influence the other five themes. The counter-stories served as an introduction to the seven emerging themes identified.

To discuss the seven themes, I work through each of the themes presenting the findings in a combination of narrative quotes from the administrators and my interpretation as the researcher. To differentiate my voice from the administrators interviewed, I have italicized their quoted responses. I develop these themes as they move in the direction of the institutional

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context. This approach is used to show how the permanence of racism and the role of institutional leaders are evident as communicated by the administrators interviewed. The seven themes identified are outlined in this chapter by sections. The first section focuses on the financial challenges experienced by administrators leading minority-based programs. The second section describes the implication of existing silos. The third section describes how equitable resources and treatment are not always equal. The fourth section discovers how social challenges create institutional discrimination and implicit bias. The fifth section explores how checking the boxes and formality are a common practice. The sixth section gives the administrators' perspectives on racism as a factor within the academic environment. The seventh section discusses institutional leadership support and engagement.

4.2.1 Financial challenges experienced by administrators leading minority-based programs

Financial resources were a common concern among the ten administrators. Not having adequate funding stretches across all the administrators' responses from numerous interview questions asked. Across the administrators interviewed, financial resources play a significant role in providing services, programmatic development, and services within their respective schools and departments. Senior institutional leaders compromise resource allocations for scholarships and potential recruitment activities of students, staff, and faculty, and retention-based programs and services seem to fall short of receiving adequate funding.

Without income in perpetuity and annual distributions from endowments, it is difficult to support students, award scholarships, fund academic programs, and other institutional expenditures. Respondents are concerned that decisions institutional leaders make regarding the

distribution of available funding can have repercussions which trickle down from the institution, schools, departments, programs, and ultimately to the students. When financial resources are not provided, ultimately, this has forced some administrators to spend time searching for alternatives to support their programs, services, and students. Some administrators suggested it was their responsibility to identify and secure external funding to leverage resources to financially support their programs. This daunting challenge compromises the time administrators dedicate to students. Some administrators expressed that when funding is not available, this could potentially limit the opportunity of underrepresented college students from attending and achieving college completion. The above counter-narratives by the administrators are examples of inequitable patterns and practices associated with forms of racism driven by institutional leaders. The other administrators' responses further suggest that the funding challenges are essential to their academic programs. The following three excerpts address specific aspects of concern expressed by the administrators:

Q2:   For some students, they struggle especially during the first year, the first year is always a transition for all students. If they lose their scholarship money their opportunity to stay here is jeopardized because many families cannot pick up that cost."

Q3:   "We do not have enough money to offer enough scholarships to students. We do not have the endowment as some of our peer institutions. You know in some of our programs, we are top in the nation; therefore, I do not think it is necessary that we should lack support."

Q7a: "Make sure units had enough dedicated funding to be competitive when it comes to recruiting talented under-represented racial and ethnic minority students. We do not have the dedicated funds that some schools do so that would be number one."

Without funding it is difficulty to recruit the students, specifically students of color. More importantly, if funding for scholarships is not available, this excludes some underrepresented students from attending the institution. This could be perceived as another example of diversity and inclusion not being institutional priorities.

Next, included in the comments are concerns regarding affordability for underrepresented college students to attend college. Further, administrators express concern about institutional priorities about endowments. As one administrator indicates, there is a wish that funding was not an issue. Other funding concerns addressed the reliance of grant money for initiatives directed toward serving students of color, such as the following three excerpts:

Q6:   *"First and foremost funding - I live on grant money, and so every three years I have to apply for my job, that is how I live. Every year I must do annual reports and budget stuff, which is a time that I feel I could be doing more to support and serve students. Instead, I am going through accounting and budgeting report and begging for more grant money. I think we have a record of success, therefore, why is this not getting easier? We seem to have proven ourselves, why doesn't the university invest in us at all? You feel you are not valued. When we do not get a response, it lets me know we are not a priority - it is emotionally crippling and unvalued."*

Q6:   *"Some of the challenges are money - our funding is not stable. I have been told in the professional world that if your funding is not stable than you are not stable. Our funding is not stable. Our program has been around since the late 60 early 70s, and for us not to have hard money coming from the University is problematic."*

Q7:   *"The time we are spending looking for grant money, it comes back to the bolt on mentality. If you have the grant money coming in why would the University want to spend money on you? That is free money to pay for staff and faculty members that I have working with us, and*

they look at it as free cash. Eventually, the grant money will go away, and maybe we create corporate partnerships. However, going after corporations, they may generate a little funding. Often the questions that come up is why are you doing the fundraising? Shouldn't Pitt have people for that, why am I trying to develop relationships with a corporation? Shouldn't your focus be on working with students? There is no one at Pitt available to help with fundraising, part of it is an organizational failure."

The direction and decisions of institutional leaders play an enormous role in how funding is disbursed throughout the university to various academic programs, auxiliaries, and service areas. The data gathered from the administrators' responses confirmed that not only is funding limited, but funding allocations are based on institutional priorities. The programs also rely upon external fundraising sources. The administrators did not feel secure about their current funding sources and seem to imply if institutional racism was a factor. It is evident that some administrators feel their programs are not valued or as valuable as other programs that serve the majority student population, which is predominantly White. Furthermore, it is the impression that some of the programs and services designed to serve underrepresented students are "added on" or "bolted on," quoting one administrator interviewed.

Although the administrators stated that funding was an issue, the excerpts captured were from the administrators who provided in-depth responses. Of the ten administrators interviewed, only two of them indicated they relied on soft or grant funding to support their programs and were specific in identifying what they perceived as best approaches to secure additional funding. However, none of the administrators discussed specifics about hard funding or new opportunities to gain additional funding. The University in its effort to support one of the most vulnerable student populations may further marginalize the underrepresented student population because of

administrators not having the appropriate resources they need to succeed in their efforts to serve and support these students.

4.2.2 Implications of existing silos

As financial challenges proved to be an existing barrier identified by administrators, the decentralization creating silos presents challenges as well. The administrators suggest that silos restrain organizational collaboration, hinder information sharing, and lessen the opportunity to build professional relationships among colleagues. The administrators also stated that silos create a level of territorial control between some of the administrators in other institutional areas. Silos appear to be systemic and university-wide causing greater decentralization and creating a sense of exclusion and alienation while diminishing the overall efforts of efficiency, operations, and morale. The existence of the silos was apparent between areas that are under the same umbrella but not necessarily part of the system. Based on observation during the interviews, the senior-level administrators seem not to encounter the same burdens of dealing with silos as middle-level administrators and appear to navigate better within the institutional system to make appropriate connections.

The following three excerpts, however, address silos relating to the following: being part of the umbrella but not part of the culture; territorial control; and restraint of organizational collaboration and a sense of exclusion:

Q6:   "The silos again and the difficulty, I think for this office we are part of the umbrella; however, we do not live within the culture. We should make partnerships and create opportunities to connect with individuals in the schools so that we can move our initiatives through, or we can work with them to adapt to whatever they are doing to make sure that it will

be appropriate, holistic, and welcoming. So, the fact we do not live within the administrative structure of the schools is a challenge. That is because again we live in kind of an awkward space."

Q5a: "Well we still have some silos, I think it is human nature to try to exercise power wherever you are. Sometimes moving initiatives can be a little bit difficult because individuals have a death grip on their areas of responsibilities. So, you know breaking some of those can be a little bit difficult. I think that will always be a concern. Yeah, in the end, it does not matter whether we are talking about student experiences or faculty experiences, the impact is still the same. You know it inhibits progress."

The comments from the two administrators demonstrate that there is concern regarding silos and the challenges they create regarding collaborative efforts to form cohesive systems to support underrepresented college students. It is apparent that institutional leadership has not addressed the silo mentality that has been intentionally or unintentionally created. The next excerpt address aspects of silos which create a sense of exclusion as explained by one administrator:

Q7:   "A lot of times the professional staff of color that work with students of color are in silos, and it does not allow us to be able to get out to make a change because you are stuck in your school trying to make the change that is necessary there. It is hard to get out of the school to make a bigger change in the institution. We are one of the few programs at the University of Pittsburgh that is specific to having a program based off students of color. We are the only program at the university that has this commitment to students of color where there is an actual program where people are meeting with students to make sure they are okay."

This administrator's response revealed that there is a need for senior institutional leaders in higher education to assess how silos not only create barriers minimizing opportunities to optimize programs, services, and build a healthy campus community. However, a more significant concern is how such institutional silos not only create such divisions within the institution but formulate a disconnection for administrators of color causing a feeling of exclusion or alienation.

4.2.3 Equitable resources and treatment are not always equal

As administrators discuss the existence of decentralization in creating institutional silos, equitable resources and treatment were also identified as barriers to facilitating challenges. The distribution of institutional resources and support for the minority-based programs serving and supporting underrepresented college students did not appear to reflect equal distribution, causing a sense of unfair treatment and injustice leading one to question if this is another example of institutional leadership demonstrating unconscious bias and unfairness towards the minority programs and the underrepresented students.

More specifically, reference is given to how the minority-based programs seem to lack stable funding, and administrators perceive them not to be a financial priority of the university. The following excerpts address specific aspects of concern about funding minority programs:

Q5: *"The other side of that funding is our minority program is not funded as a stable funding source, so we get our funding from the state, so if the state ever shuts down in Pennsylvania than our funding shuts down. The institution has not committed the program to make it an institutionalized program because the money does not always come from the institution."*

It appears in the eyes of some respondents that the University has not committed to fund or support minority-based programs fully. This has been a historical problem with PWIs and is a further demonstration of how senior institutional leadership may consciously not value minority-based programs. Equitable resources and treatment were not only associated with funding, but issues of test scores and academic performance also seem to dictate how students are embraced and encouraged by the university. The next excerpts address specific aspects regarding equity based on test scores and academic performance of underrepresented college students:

Q5b: *"The biggest thing is that society is so statistically oriented these days that people or universities like Pitt want to brag about how high their SAT scores are and how high the student rankings are. I am most concerned about those students who are not in that upper level. I have no proof of this, but I worry about the university trying to improve its image to the outside world and forgetting that we are in the middle of the city of Pittsburgh and we have a responsibility to our local families."*

The concern of equitable resources and treatment stemmed from the perception that underrepresented students were not granted the same opportunities and access as other student populations that excelled academically. This administrator has a personal interest in championing and advocating for underrepresented students to receive an equitable education and services to help them succeed at PWIs. He is aware that without resources, support, and an opportunity to obtain a quality education, some of the underrepresented students, often viewed as marginalized, may not otherwise have a chance to achieve academic success.

There was further elaboration regarding the importance of having equitable resources and providing fair treatment, specifically for ethnic minority students and other student groups that may be marginalized. Although some students may have to work harder for academic success,

they should be granted a fair chance. The next excerpt addresses specific aspects of concern about the university and institutional leadership leveling the playing field to ensure adequate preparation and support for underrepresented students' academic achievement and success:

Q7a: *"I would make a real effort to concentrate on local Pittsburgh high school students from any minority group to include African-American and Latino females in science, and the gay population. You know we now have some transgendered students on campus. Any population that feels underrepresented or not part of the majority. I would try to look at kids like that who are not academic superstars but want to make this happen. I would have special programs set up to help them be successful all the time, letting them know that we believe in you. This is to help you be successful in today's world."*

This administrator gives a voice to understanding that there are White administrators at PWIs who are also advocating to ensure that equitable resources and fair treatment are equally granted to underrepresented college students. Respondents believe that advocating for underrepresented students takes not only courage but a commitment to step beyond the periphery to promote academic excellence. Activism for better conditions requires addressing racial disparities which often affect underrepresented students. Helping to facilitate change is a process requiring the efforts of institutional leaders regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender.

4.2.4 Social challenges create institutional discrimination and implicit bias

The previous section describes the concern of how minority-based programs and underrepresented college students experience the impact of not having equitable resources as well as a treatment of unfairness. Inequities and unfair treatment are often associated with the social challenges relating to acts of institutional discrimination and implicit bias. Social

challenges have been persistent issues in higher education and more specifically at PWIs. Discrimination and implicit bias have been observed at some PWIs and are experiences that can be overt, covert, or unconscious displaying injustice actions and prejudicial treatment towards administrators, faculty, staff, and students of color.

Administrators provide insight into their professional experiences and observations regarding social challenges associated with discrimination and implicit bias often encountered by underrepresented college students from faculty who have a bias, not about only test scores but also a student's quantitative aptitude and academic abilities. The following excerpt addresses specific aspects of concern regarding faculty bias toward students of color:

Q5: *"Our faculty very much prioritize - again they have this kind of bias towards quantitative skills, and our Indian and Chinese students have solid skills in coding. They have completed an undergraduate degree in computer science or engineering and are going from a technical degree to another technical degree. Many of our students of color are coming from an undergraduate degree that may be in sociology, business, or something else. We are trying to convince them that a master's degree in information science and computer science would pair very well with their undergraduate. They may not have strong quantitative or technical skills; however, they are much better regarding group work, team management, and communications skills, which are all the soft skills. The difficulty is that the soft skills are not necessarily recognized or valued as highly by the faculty. Because of the difference in the students' level of quantitative skills and often the pre-class work of some international students' groups - the cliques already start as soon as they walk in the room because the other students already know each other, they are speaking another language. Students of color often are excluded from the group and viewed as*

not being as competent; therefore, other students do not want to work with them - this is a
challenge we are seeing at the student level."

It is difficult to change implicit bias and acts of discrimination, which have been ingrained into the fabric of the institution. Underrepresented students struggle to gain the confidence and change the mindset of the faculty and other students to believe that although they do not have strong quantitative backgrounds, they are capable of learning and developing the necessary quantitative skills to perform well. Faculty and other students may overlook the other great qualities such as soft skills that underrepresented students bring into the learning environment. It is also unfortunate that underrepresented college students are excluded, and the skills that they bring into the learning environment are not valued, or it is the assumption that they will not succeed well in quantitative-dominated fields.

Further discussion reveals that acts of discrimination and implicit bias are not only practices by faculty and other student groups towards underrepresented students in the classroom, but within the university, there is bias associated with how well students perform on standardized tests. The following excerpt address the specific aspect of concern regarding how at the university level, evidence of bias is associated with standardized test scores:

Q5b: "From an admissions perspective, this university is very interested in being able to talk

about how great their incoming class is in term of standardized test scores, and this is well

documented in the literature that the more affluent background you come from, you are taught to

take these tests. When you are coming from different backgrounds and cultures where maybe test

taking is not prioritized in the same way, your experience on that test is not that strong. Does this

mean that you cannot be a good student - no. In Pitt's quest to talk about how great SATs are, we

are leaving behind a group of students who could be just as successful in the program. We talk

about this all the time. We are missing a group of students from an admission perspective because the university has decided that they want to prioritize test scores."

The respondent argues that because the university is more interested in high standardized test scores for its image of being a highly selective institution, this does not allow for a holistic admission practice giving the institution the best students and systemically disadvantages some students including those underrepresented students of color.

As the emphasis is placed on quantitative and standardized test scores, underrepresented students of color encounter not only being excluded and alienated, but they also are also stigmatized. The stigmatization that these students encounter is further demonstrated in how they are treated once they matriculate at the university. Although some administrators and faculty may have good intentions, their ethnocentric bias is a factor affecting underrepresented college students. The following excerpt address a specific aspect of concern relating to stigmatization and the treatment underrepresented college students experience once they are here at the university:

Q9:   *"I think we have well-meaning people who want to do right - this is a strength. We care about the students and want to see them succeed. Students have changed since I have been in school, but just an understanding about where they are coming from is important. How do you have a good conversation without making assumptions about someone without knowing anything about them? Students want to share their stories. We have a staff of student support professionals who want to do right. For example, a quiet African American male is not necessarily angry; he is just quiet. I had a White male advisor tell me I cannot get anything out of him because he has a bad attitude - I asked, 'well, how did you try to reach him?' There is the assumption about a student's behavior that a group here makes when you do not know his or her*

background. That student might be bored, may have a bad experience with someone and doesn't want to open himself up to that again. Things as simple as how we set up our offices, so using my example, I do not like to talk to students behind my desk."

The administrator acknowledges there are White staff and faculty at the University that have good intentions to support students of color. However, there remains the tendency to label, stigmatize, and discriminate against these students because of the ignorance and ethnocentric bias that many of these staff and faculty have towards the students of color. It is essential that instead of faculty and staff making assumptions about a student because of their racial ethnicity and gender, they should try to place themselves in the shoes of the students to gain a better understanding about the student's experience, journey, or story. It is easy to make assumptions when an individual has never sat on the side of being a person of color in an environment that isn't necessarily welcoming.

Of the administrators interviewed, five directly confirmed that discrimination and implicit biases existed within the institutional system. However, administrators mentioned or suggested that methods are being used within their programs to combat implicit bias and discrimination that underrepresented students experience. This was evident in the different support services and strategic approaches used to build the students' academic skills, self-efficacy, and confidence. On the other hand, as administrators are putting forth best practices to address the social challenges, it was not apparent what actions institutional leaders are taking at the various institutional levels to address social challenges of discrimination and implicit bias to create a more inclusive environment.

4.2.5　Checking the boxes and formality are common practices

As some of the administrators discussed issues centered around social challenges relating to discrimination and implicit bias, some of the administrators also expressed concern about institutional leadership's conscious efforts to address diversity and inclusion as a priority rather than using an approach of going through the motions. In the next section, there is the discussion about checking the box to address diversity and inclusion. This creates concern regarding the lack of prioritization put forth by senior institutional leadership. The framework of the permanence of racism provides opportunities to examine intentional efforts of inclusiveness versus further superficial practices.

Although there is evidence of efforts to address diversity and inclusion at the program levels, respondents believe that at the university level diversity and inclusion appear to be a low priority of senior institutional leadership. Ensuring an inclusive environment is dependent upon not only senior institutional leadership's ability and desire to embrace change but also taking the necessary actions of inclusiveness issues and concerns relating to diversity and inclusion that were expressed at the department, school, and university levels. The following three excerpts address specific aspects of concern that diversity and inclusion are not institutional priorities:

Q5:　*"We have diversity workshops for our freshmen class, but that is just something for them to check off that they have completed. I don't know how much that impacts the freshmen when you talk about those workshops because it's again mandated, but it is not something that is checked back on by the university."*

Q5b:　*"We have not consistently addressed diversity as a priority. When we have gotten pressure from the provost, it is so let's have a diversity meeting. The meeting was pretty much what are we doing and let's get a handle on all the program's diversity initiatives. What I pitched*

in a slightly frustrated voice was, it feels like you are again checking the box and just counting heads. This is like all the critics of affirmative action quotas, that same mentality."

Q11: "It is wonderful to use words like inclusivity and diverse and all those kinds of things. However, again, it is making it happen. Also, you know I think every chair we have had would tell you they are very supportive of this. This is the first time we have had a chair that said, 'oh yeah bring those kids up I want to show them our lab.'"

Although there is an acknowledgment of efforts to implement and provide diversity and inclusion programs, unfortunately, the excerpts are examples of how diversity and inclusion are practices of formality. Further, instead of diversity and inclusion being implemented to create an inclusive environment, it appears that diversity and inclusion are used for reporting and documenting purposes to complete mandated reporting, and to adhere to trainings as a mandated requirement rather than for providing ongoing training to build race relations, cultural sensitivity, and inclusiveness among college students. The following three excerpt address specific aspects of concern regarding institutional intentions and formality:

Q5a: "I get slapped on the back all the time for the great work we do, and it is six years in that I realize how much we are the bolted-on diversity program that gets used to check that box. So, when the provost comes along and says I need a report, what are you guys doing for diversity? I get an email saying hey what are your numbers for diversity and how many students? I need to fill out an Excel spreadsheet on how many, how much are we spending, and where are they going. It becomes evident that over time that this is kind of a check the 'nice box' for somebody. Right now, we are trying to get somebody to understand the commitment and have a willingness to support you when you ask them for money. It would be students of color we want to support them. Well, will you support them with money to go to a conference?"

Q5c: *"Again, I don't know their thinking but it does often feel when reports or requests come down to the dean and then filters down to faculty and staff, this very much feels like we need to put something together for accreditation, we need to put something together for marketing, or we need to know diversity stuff, it feels superficial."*

Q7a: *"We do a mandated diversity training for the first-year students. We bring a guy in; he was a product of the Investing Now Program. He is tasked with talking to our first-year students about why diversity is important not just because you must sit in this room. How is it going to impact your daily world of work, how does industry view it, how can it enrich your life? We do that one training and don't do anything else with it in our classrooms. If I had the funding, I would love training for the faculty to teach them ways to integrate diversity training."*

To address diversity and inclusion seem to be an institutional issue that senior leaders are not addressing. There is an expectation that the administrators leading the minority-based programs are to implement actions not necessarily having relevance other than for documenting and going through the motions.

Not only did administrators express concern regarding the University's lack of prioritization of diversity and inclusion, but there is also the notion that some senior institutional leaders are equally unaware of the issues relating to diversity and inclusion from a realistic perspective. The following excerpt addresses the specific aspect of leadership not being aware of institutional issues relating to diversity and inclusion:

Q5a: *"I think when mandates are sent down from the top, the top is not always on the ground level working with the issues. I think that is the part that is always missed, and sometimes you need to go into the field and observe the issues. So, it goes back to our concept of adaptive leadership, looking at the floor from the balcony. If you are always on the balcony and you do*

not come to the floor, you are not going to know. I do not think many times the administration honestly knows because they do not come to the floor to survey what is going on. Their thought about diversity and inclusion is going to look different than the staff members' thoughts about diversity and inclusion, so let's not put race on top of that. As a black woman who is a staff member, I look at diversity and inclusion very differently than my White counterparts. I do not always think that my voice is heard to ensure that it is being looked at all different levels instead of through one set of eyes, which is usually the majority set of eyes."

There is the notion that the issues of diversity and inclusion extend beyond the perception of checking the box and formality. An additional issue uncovered is how a person of color may view diversity and inclusion differently than the University's predominantly White population. This raises concern and may support the assumption that some White senior institutional leadership and administrators lack the sensitivity and awareness of understanding race and racism as an underlying institutional problem.

Although some administrators referenced numerous times that diversity and inclusion felt more like a formality and checking boxes, and some senior institutional leadership were unaware of diversity and inclusion issues, in contrast, it was conveyed that some of the newly appointed institutional leadership are attempting to address and drive change to promote race relations and inclusiveness. For instance, the Diversity and Inclusion Office is acting to institute a variety of programming for administrators, staff, and students. The following three excerpts address specific aspects of senior institutional leadership efforts:

Q11:   *"The Diversity Office has been doing a good job bringing in a speaker series. An example of a topic includes 'Understanding and overcoming implicit bias training in higher education.' I am always curious to see who shows up for this. Because of where a student sits in*

the classroom, the faculty makes assumptions. We encourage underrepresented students to sit in the front to overcome the bias that faculty sometimes have.

Q11:   The Diversity Office is bringing in training and has done an excellent job this year; however, participation is optional and so the same groups are usually there. The individuals that probably could use a little more insight are not necessarily buying in. There is no repercussion for their lack of participation. As a school, we need maybe make it part of their evaluation."

Q11:   "The diversity and inclusion initiatives are out of the Chancellor's Office. Every university does something like that and becomes these meaningless things where it is like, oh we have another diversity event - okay well great and who shows up? All the folks already invested and interested in that line of work. Then you get a bunch of folks preaching to the choir, and we go yeah that was great. I see effort from leadership, kind of these good faith efforts."

The administrator interviewed argues that although efforts are being made through the Diversity and Inclusion Office to provide institutional programs and initiatives to address diversity and inclusion and to foster an environment reflective of the overall demographic population present at the university, unfortunately, diversity and inclusion training appears to be a meaningless effort. Staff, faculty, and administrators that should be present and need such training usually are not present because the university does not make it a requirement or hold employees accountable to attend. This is another example of going through the motions rather than prioritization of promoting inclusivity, cultural sensitivity, and climate change.

As administrators discussed the current efforts of the Diversity and Inclusion Office to address diversity and inclusion, administrators also state that at the university level, some senior institutional leaders are also trying to develop action plans to address the issues of diversity and inclusion. Regardless of the efforts, the middle-level administrators interviewed confirmed the

university's lack of commitment to recruit and hire faculty of color. It is the assumption that hiring faculty of color is an opportunity for them to serve as role models because of their ability to relate to underrepresented college students. The following excerpts address specific concerns regarding the institution not actively recruiting and hiring faculty of color:

Q5C: *"We have gained more students; however, we have not gained more faculty and staff of color."*

Q5a: *"As for understanding students' challenges, we now have two women on our faculty. We have no faculty of color in the entire building or the college. Our leadership is all White men generally, or Asian men and so part of it is -- I do not want to be malicious -- but part of it is ignorance. These folks have not spent time talking to students, other faulty, or people that have come from different backgrounds."*

Q12: *"At the school level, recruit faculty of color as role models, not just one. They need to do batch hiring. That means bringing three on board during the same year. They should consider maybe hiring junior faculty because they feel vulnerable whether they are minorities or not. They need to come because you need role models, you need to be able to support a diverse research agenda, and that does not mean like oh we are going to be researching minorities. Often, the folks who are going to be studying issues of equality, access, and inequity are those that tend to be underrepresented folks. You may have folks doing more interdisciplinary type stuff and looking and saying, 'wow that is an outstanding faculty member' but I do not know if that person fits in our department. I would love to see leadership make an effort for those faculty to fit. You need sort of faculty development and mentorship program."*

Q5c: *"I do see a genuine effort in hiring a variety of people in student affairs. Unfortunately, it*

has not trickled as much from the hiring perspective into the faculty piece and here in [my

school]. However, I do see a strong effort university-wide to bring in diverse opinions,

backgrounds, and training that does lend itself to a wonderful environment. I see a lot of

interesting and diverse speakers coming on campus where at one point we did not have as

many."

It is no surprise that the current institutional structure is not making greater strides to

recruit and hire more faculty of color. This further supports the literature that PWIs have

excluded minorities from tenured and non-tenured track positions. This is also a reflection of the

persistence of segregation in higher education and the university not being aware, receptive to

the needs of underrepresented college students and understanding the importance of having

faculty of color on campus.

The presence of more faculty of color on campus is an opportunity for the university to

shift toward improving the campus climate if diversity and inclusion is an institutional priority. If

the notion that faculty of color can serve as critical partners to promote the campus climate and

enrich the academic environment, hiring of faculty of color is an opportunity not only to support

students in their academic and social development but also to build a greater sense of belonging

for other faculty, administrators, and students of color as well. The following excerpts address

specific aspects concerning the importance of creating a sense of belonging:

Q5:   *"Barriers that I see are that we recruit these students, they get here and look around and*

don't have people that look like them in positions. We have a small group of underrepresented

faculty members teaching engineering classes. It is important for someone sitting in a class to

feel some sense of belonging. I like to think of noticing and talking with them is helpful. There is

something to be said about institutional modeling support. I feel like we miss that right now, it is

not a simple solution. I think attention needs to be paid to when we are bringing new people in,
and it's a diverse group. That does not solve all the problems; however, it could help."

Q5:   "I think this is true for colleges in general, but especially for underrepresented students,
they need to know that there is a friendly face waiting and interested in their success. I wanted to
call these students offered admissions and say, 'Congratulations, here is what I do, let me
connect you. What are you interested in?' Admissions have their process, and they want to follow
their process. They told me once people deposit then I can get their names that feels late. We
also do this way too late in the game. Competitive schools and HBCUs are smart. Upfront from
September, October, and the summer before their senior year, let's bring them in. Pitt does not
start awarding their scholarships until January, December. The best students have looked at the
programs showing an interest in them. I think you set a relationship up for success too, and
relationships are critical in college."

As some of the administrators addressed issues of checking the boxes, going through
formality, having good intentions, and the efforts among senior institutional leadership, race and
racism are systemic institutional barriers and cultural norms.

4.2.6   Administrators' perspectives regarding race and racism

Racism historically continues to evolve affecting administrators and underrepresented college
students. Racism often is experienced outside of the classroom. It has reached all areas within
higher education. Racism can also be viewed as the cause associated with access, silos, unfair
treatment, inequitable resources, discrimination, and bias. Racism is a difficult subject to
confront and address. The ability to confront and address racism must begin with self-awareness,
attitudinal change, and individuals and the university becoming more cognizant of its boundaries

of comfort to empower positive change. The following excerpt addresses specific aspects of concern regarding discomfort to address racism:

Q5b: *"I think one barrier is many times people do not want to listen when it feels uncomfortable, and so, they do not want to hear that we have a problem with race. They do not want to hear that. They want to say we will do a year of diversity and we will do these programs and that will make it okay. I think another thing is the university do not always have to have black and brown people in leadership to make a change when it comes to race issues. Many times, our White counterparts do not see themselves as advocates or allies because they do not look at it as a problem because of their privilege. Their privilege allows them to see the environment and the world very differently. So, when bringing things to one's attention, sometimes it is second-guessed. You think this is racist or do you think this is somebody misunderstanding something, either way; it still comes out being racist because you still are ignorant in your thought process that is hindering somebody who is already viewed as being less than by society. I think at the institutional level the biggest barrier is understanding that these things exist, and you are not the most capable person even if you are in leadership to address these issues, but you can learn."*

The administrator makes the argument that the issue of race creates a high level of discomfort for leadership and the university because White privilege gets in the way of having awareness or acknowledging that race issues exist and is the underlying systemic problem that creates barriers for people of color at all levels within the institution. Further, White privilege does not allow for advocacy or serving as allies to those perceived as insignificant or less valued. Unfortunately, the issue of race is too complicated for diversity training alone and requires the expertise of skilled individuals, which might not include senior leadership.

The administrators interviewed would like to see some institutional supports, an improved climate, engagement of concern regarding race issues, and greater prioritization of diversity and inclusion effort by senior institutional leaders to address race and racism. The following excerpts address specific aspects of concern regarding the role of senior institutional leadership:

Q5c: *"Having a young chancellor that sees race and diversity very differently which has started to change the institution. What I mean by that is many people in key leadership positions are either Pittsburgh bred or have been here a very long time, and their mindset is very much so an old-school mindset when it comes to race, this is to suggest that Whiteness and privilege can get in the way of inclusiveness. I think that the institution is trying to gain more black and brown students and staff. However, where they are failing is not having an atmosphere that is conducive to the students and professionals that they are bringing in. You are not changing anything when it comes to diversity and inclusion; you are only creating more of a mess."*

Q5b: *"I think part of it is philosophical thinking from leadership, and so one of the things that I see, we just had a meeting in February about diversity. We have a new dean who started in the summer. He is having his meetings and getting the house in order; however, he decides to have a diversity meeting at Pitt in February. Now, my first question is why is that happening in February when you already put a call for hiring new faculty in August and September. If you are really talking about recruitment, retention, and best practice for getting a good supply of underrepresented folks to apply for your faculty positions, shouldn't we have had this meeting back before you did the search, before you placed the ad, or before you decided what the job call was going to be. Really what it came down to it, we need more black and brown folks in the building."*

The administrator believes that hiring senior leadership outside of Pittsburgh who are younger and having more significant exposure to diversity and inclusion are more objective, receptive, and can identify that there are institutional issues of race, diversity, and inclusion which should be addressed. Former and senior leadership from the Pittsburgh, PA area were not willing or chose not to believe that the institutional system was broken or were colorblind to race, diversity, and inclusion matters because they were not directly affected. Further, the administrator makes a point to state that the of hiring black and brown people does not solve the race, diversity, and inclusion issues still existing within the institutional system. The concern voiced by the administrators has been an ongoing institutional issue for many years. This is another example of how racism is not only among the students but part of the culture of the institutional leadership and the university.

Another administrator further expressed that to implement diversity, the institution should not look only at recruiting and hiring faculty of color to demonstrate efforts of increasing diversity but also create an environment that embraces commitment and talent.

Q5b: *"You need to overhaul the school, the culture, and the model of thinking to say, 'how are we are going bring in the best talent that we can find?' The best talent means you must cast a live net. You want a big open search for students, faculty, or leadership. How do you allow people to arrive at your organization, and how do you adequately support them? How do you recognize a lot of the invisible labor that faculty of color do all the time? One black faculty member in your school guess what, she will be on every committee related to diversity because she is the diverse faculty. Most of our White male colleagues and leadership do not think about that. Every single student who is going to be stressed out and maybe looking for a mentor will go to the faculty of color."*

These administrators are arguing that casting a wider net to recruit more students and faculty of color is not enough. There is a greater need to identify ways to retain and promote people of color to include students, faculty, or staff. This is another example of how racism is not only an underlying issue but persistent, which drives institutional practices and decisions made by senior institutional leadership.

Although all the administrators confirmed that racism was a factor, two administrators stated they had not personally experienced institutional racism as administrators at the university. However, they were aware of students of color encountering outward displays of racism. The following excerpt addresses the specific aspect of an administrator's concern regarding displays of racism towards underrepresented college students:

Q6a: *"I have not experienced any form of racism during my time at the University of Pittsburgh, I have not seen any outward display. I am a White straight guy running a diversity program at Pitt, which is a weird thing - I get it. Nothing has ever been explicitly mentioned but it is often when I talk to students, and they share comments from faculty, along the line of, 'oh you don't seem very good in this subject, why are you here?' That happened to one of my students this past semester - that is infuriating and made me want to drive across the country - how dare they say that. What I see is a lot of cultural ignorance and lack of exposure."*

The suggestion that the administrator has not experienced racism is not unique, because this generally is not the experience of a White male. What is unique is that he leads a program that supports explicitly underrepresented students. This type of interaction is not the norm because White male administrators in higher education typically generally do not work with students of color. This is a representation of a White administrator having the true compassion to support and advocate for the success of these students.

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4.2.7 Senior institutional leadership and the support they provide

Institutional leaders influence systemic decisions, practices, and actions at all levels of the university. It is evident that race continues to persist as a challenge that administrators have witnessed, more specifically the experience that administrators, staff, and students of color have encountered by their peers at the university. Leadership has the power to dismantle the effects of systemic racism. Administrators suggest the appointment of a new chancellor and departmental leadership in various academic areas welcomes an opportunity to pave the way of new change to dismantle various forms of racism to further promote equitable treatment, equity, justice, diversity, and inclusion. The next respondent also believes that the hiring of new senior institutional leadership is proving to make a difference about addressing the race, diversity, and inclusion problem but also welcoming a more collaborative approach regarding hearing from the administrators on the frontline who are aware of the persistent race issues.

Q5d: "We have new leadership, so we are in great transition, we are getting a new dean next year. We have a new associate dean of academic affairs; she will admit that she does not know everything. I give her credit on this. When I bring an issue to her, she listens and asks what can we do? That is what I need to make this program work and make the students feel like they can do this. She has been very helpful. She states I know we are not where we need to be with faculty buying into diversity efforts here, and I know we are not where we need to be when we are talking about faculty and staff of color. What do we need to do because I am willing to try?"

Q8: "We have an associate dean of diversity host a number of seminars where he brings in big name speakers to talk about diversity, inclusion, campus climate, and how you deal with undergraduate and graduate students of color and how do you support students here - he has

been doing this for the past four years. You see the turnout of faculty and administrators and people from other schools coming to the seminars growing year after year."

This is another example demonstrating how the topic creates discomfort for some institutional leaders. Some of the institutional leaders appear to be reluctant to address or confront issues centered around racism and diversity. However, newly appointed senior institutional leaders such as the dean acknowledges that there are apparent issues relevant to having greater diversity and hiring more faculty of color. It is crucial that leaders and all personnel at the university understand that their effort of avoidance often can magnify the problem at hand further. Unless there is a positive approach to deal with issues of racism and the problems underrepresented student face, we are doing more of a disservice to underrepresented student populations. Change occurs at all level of the institutions; however, it is most effective when it is fully supported at the top level(s).

Q7: "*Our leadership in this school does not like making people feel uncomfortable. So, when there are opportunities to talk to people about the way things could be better those conversations often do not happen. We had a dean of diversity who was largely ineffective. He lost the respect of underrepresented students. When we started to close and restrict our admission, those of us who wanted to help were not able to do so because we were not a part of the program. When I stopped working for him, I was not allowed to do certain things because that was his work to do. Instead of the school saying it is all our jobs to do this, I choose to make my difference individually.*"

As turf battles exist within the institutional system, one would have to consider if territorial behaviors are likewise the underlying culprit of some existing silos previously identified. It is perceptible that turf battles construct disharmony and an absence of synergy

among departments, units, divisions, and programs. Such actions break down the institutional system causing individuals to work against one another rather than together. Also, this can threaten and affect working relationships, centralization, productivity, and resources.

The board perspectives captured in the interviews suggest that senior leaders have the power and authority to maintain a broken institutional established by past senior leaders who chose to ignore or not address issues of racism and to welcome inclusivity and diversity. However, the efforts of newly appointed senior leadership appear eager and willing to address race issues which seem to have impeded not only students of color but administrators and faculty of color throughout the history of the university. New senior leaders appear to have a genuine concern and eagerness to make race, diversity, and inclusion a priority. Regardless of the eagerness and new approach new senior leaders are taking, undoing the long history of racism, discrimination, and inequities will not occur overnight, such efforts remain long-term.

5.0   SUMMARIES, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

This study investigated the perspectives of 10 administrators by examining their experiences and perceptions regarding institutional barriers that create challenges in their efforts to support underrepresented college students at a PWI. In this chapter I provide an interpretive summary, conclusions, and identifying implications for future research and practice. The information discussed in this chapter directly reflects the data analysis presented in chapter four.

5.1   INTERPRETIVE SUMMARY

Based on the existing literature as well as overall trends, the following three research questions emerged: 1) What are the perceptions of administrators about the work they do to support underrepresented undergraduate college students? 2) What institutional systems, services, and programs are supporting the success of underrepresented undergraduate college students? 3) What facilitates identifying challenges for administrators as they work to support underrepresented undergraduate college students? The first question allowed for a specific examination of the perceptions of administrators, a primary component of the present study. The second question provided an avenue for the analysis of overlap between some of the existing trends in supporting underrepresented college students and the current institutional systems, services, and programs evident in the study. The third question allowed for uncovering systemic

barriers that created challenges for administrators. The overall findings from the study and seven emerging themes address the three research questions below:

5.1.1 What are the perceptions of administrators about the work they do to support underrepresented undergraduate college students?

Of the 10 middle- and senior-level administrators interviewed, one of the senior-level administrators works indirectly with college students through university partnerships to support underrepresented college students, and the other nine administrators individually work directly with underrepresented college students through their programs which are designed to support the academic and social development of this student population. Collectively they confirmed that their efforts to support underrepresented college students is meaningful, challenging, and rewarding. Mutually, they agreed they were achieving the purpose of what their programs utilize: a holistic development approach with a focus on creating a sense of belonging, recruitment, cultural competence, retention, programming, graduate school preparation, and career development. One administrator, specifically stressed that it was the goal to improve programs, scholarships, and services that help students succeed academically.

In summary, across all the administrators, they communicated that they had an unconditional commitment to support underrepresented students. However, seven administrators were explicit and reemphasized their commitment to support underrepresented college students by making the following statements:

"I believe it is our duty, not our jobs but our responsibility to expose these students to everything that they will be exposed to in the world."

"I could not have picked anything more rewarding to do. At the end of the day knowing that I had helped the students to be successful to achieve the goal that they had when they walked in the doors of the university entrance makes it all worthwhile."

"You are doing something that's meaningful."

"I stumbled into this job, and I could not have asked for something better."

"I mean we have got to walk the walk - all we can do is walk out our feet."

"It is a hard role, but I would not change it for the world."

"It is my job to give somebody else a chance; so, this job is not to be taken for granted but it is a job that's important."

5.1.2 What institutional systems, services, and programs are supporting the success of underrepresented college students?

Based on the findings from the data analysis, several institutional systems, services, and programs used in the academic areas and student affairs unit to support the success of underrepresented college students. Institutional systems of support include financial assistance, student success management, and student service resources. Services to support underrepresented college students include one-on-one coaching, workshops, tutoring, academic advising, academic counseling, and cognitive analysis. Programs supporting the success of the underrepresented college students include minority recruitment programs, utilizing a comprehensive approach to supporting underrepresented through the admission process to matriculation to ensure these students are well-informed, transition, and acclimate with ease into the academic programs and university environment. Other programs included pre-academic preparation, career development, and graduation preparation.

Middle- and senior-level administrators within the academic areas and student affairs unit provide an overall scope of the services, systems, and programs they provide specifically in their areas to support underrepresented college students. Based on the responses from nine out of the ten administrators interviewed, they mutually indicated that institutional systems, services, and programs were purposely designed and developed specifically to support the success of the underrepresented students. Below is a summary of the systems, services, and programs identified by administrators in each academic area or student affairs unit.

The first academic unit's two-fold program is designed to provide social programs to ensure a sense of belonging. The program also provides academic and professional support to further the progress of student's moving through the curriculum with ease. In this academic unit, student services also provided counseling services for students experiencing academic and social problems to help them achieve degree completion.

The second academic area has a department which aims to expose students to science with a focus on demonstrating that science can be fun. Strategically, efforts are being used to encourage the students' academic and social development, while simultaneously promoting a sense of belonging as well. The third academic area is intentional about creating a safe and conscious space for students by focusing on holistic development and implementing career development and graduate school preparation. It is also the goal and mission of this office to help students expand their own identity.

The fourth academic area has an office designated to providing consultancy, recruitment, and retention for six schools with an emphasis on supporting students from recruitment through matriculation to graduation and job placement. Also, endeavors include assisting with implementing a portion of the curriculum and programming to include diversity awareness and

cultural competency workshops. The workshops are opportunities to inform students broadly about understanding social determinants. On the other hand, recruitment efforts are used to help inform students of opportunities at the university and to help facilitate inclusion in the admission process and matriculation. This student affairs unit is intentional about providing resources, expertise, and longitudinal engagement to create in-time intervention and equity space which relates to student success management and student achievement. From the standpoint of program theory, there were other program components and activities to include academic support for tutoring referred to cognitive analysis. Cognitive analysis enables the student and staff to work together to identify the student's experiences. This approach helps the staff understand the students' needs to customize the students' learning experiences.

The fifth academic area solely supports students of color in their academic and career development and ensures that these students have an awareness of all the opportunities available to them at the university. Another effort is serving as a support system away from home for these students to ensure their academic goals and objectives are met. The staff also serve as mentors and advisors to minority ethnic student organizations and provide cultural competency training to faculty and students.

The sixth academic area helps all students, including underrepresented groups, succeed. They work to identify student needs and opportunities for engagement. The last area provides undergraduate research and leadership development programs with a goal to help students of color obtain admission into graduate school. Emphasis is also placed on developing pipelines and recruiting students into research careers such as information and computer science or faculty positions. There are three components of the program: the first summer is called the introductory institute, and the purpose is to expose the students to different areas of the sciences, workshops,

and professional development. As part of the program, staff also implement retention strategies to address student issues relating to self-efficacy, confidence, and building self-image.

5.1.3 What creates institutional challenges for administrators as they work to support underrepresented college students?

The following institutional barriers created challenges for administrators in their efforts to support underrepresented college students: lack of financial resources, silos, discrimination, implicit bias, race and racism, diversity and inclusion, inequitable resources, sense of belonging, and senior institutional leadership. However, race and institutional leadership were the overarching barriers influencing the overall institutional system.

Administrators indicated that the challenges affected them directly and indirectly as they worked to support underrepresented college students. All 10 middle- and senior-level administrators confirmed that the lack of financial resources and allocation was a constant institutional problem, specifically for the programs that served minority ethnic student populations.

As confirmed by the administrators, silos proved to be an institutional problem creating challenges that affected the learning culture, hindered opportunity for collaboration on various institutional levels, discouraged racial discourse, and impacted the overall university culture. Institutional discrimination and implicit bias proved to be a challenge for both middle- and senior-level administrators. However, of the five middle-level administrators, four had experienced discrimination or implicit bias directly or observed students experiencing discrimination or implicit bias. The incidence of discrimination and implicit bias administrators personally experienced were based on their race, size, and the perception that other

administrators had of them. Administrators also referenced acts of discrimination and implicit bias was observed toward underrepresented students of color by other students and White faculty. The perception of underrepresented students not being as strong academically resulted in other students not engaging or wanting to work with the underrepresented students. Administrators, also referenced that some faculty had an implicit bias toward underrepresented based on racial ethnicity, test scores, and quantitative aptitude.

When the administrators were asked if race and racism were factors that presented challenges, consistently all 10 (100%) of the administrators confirmed that race and racism were factors. Two administrators stressed that they had not experienced racism directly. However, this is not to imply the other eight administrators directly experienced any form of racism.

Issues of diversity, inclusion, and equitability presented barriers. Out of the 10 administrators interviewed, eight (80%) indicated that their efforts to recruit and retain underrepresented college students of color often was a challenge due to the lack of an inclusive campus climate and diversity among the faculty, staff, and students of color. Many of the administrators indicated that efforts to improve inclusion could be observed campus-wide; however, four (40%) of the administrators felt that additional efforts from senior institutional leadership and the university were needed to further improve the campus climate for students, administrators, and staff of color. Administrators felt that there was not enough emphasis placed on inclusion. Of the 10 administrators, five (50%) felt that the university should put forth a more considerable effort to recruit and hire more faculty of color for greater diversity institution-wide to ensure that current and new students could see faculty who looked like them in the classroom.

Administrators stated numerous times that underrepresented students need to see faculty of color that they could identify with and serve as positive role models. Administrators also

explained that equitable and fair treatment was not the experience of some of the minority-based programs which supported underrepresented students. Further, there was the insinuation that the minority-based programs did not receive the same resources as other academic programs and other areas within the university.

The influence and support of senior institutional leadership were factors for administrators across all levels. In interviewing the 10 administrators, the perspectives of middle-level administrators differed from the senior-level administrators. The five (50%) senior administrators felt that senior institutional leaders responded to their needs, encouraged professional development, and ensured the availability of resources to support their programs.

The five middle-level administrators did not have the same experience or perception of senior leaders. Of the five middle-level administrators, two (20%) referenced that current or past senior leaders did not address issues on race or diversity due to feelings of discomfort, avoidance and because race, diversity, and inclusion were not priorities. However, all the 10 (100%) administrators stressed that the hiring of new leadership at the senior institutional, school and program levels provides great hope and change on all levels of the institution.

5.2   SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

The primary aim of this exploratory study was to investigate the perspectives of middle- and senior-level administrators, precisely at a PWI who provide resources and services through minority-based programs designed to support underrepresented college students. Through this study, institutional barriers were identified. The emerging themes are notably addressed through the administrators' narratives. Based on the data analysis, racism and the influence of senior

institutional leadership were tied closely to issues of financial resources, silos, equity, discrimination and implicit bias, and diversity and inclusion. Such barriers presented significant roadblocks within the institutional system affecting the administrators. Brooks and Watson (2018) confirmed that leadership practice influences racism at various levels within the institutional system. To provide an overall sense of the findings, the seven emerging themes are themes are outlined below:

5.2.1   Financial challenges experienced by administrators leading minority-based programs

The lack of resource allocation was identified as one of the emerging themes in the study. Middle- and senior-level administrators expressed concern regarding funding not being readily resourceful within various academic areas, specifically minority-based programs designed to support underrepresented college students. PWIs like many private and community colleges rely on federal and state appropriations and private funding; therefore, senior institutional leaders are forced to address current and future budget challenges affecting their institutions. This task proves especially overwhelming for senior institutional leaders faced with increasing changes in student populations, enrollment, funding models, and accountability measures.

As such persistent changes continue to evolve and efforts are put forth to reshape the university's culture to promote greater diversity and inclusiveness, senior institutional leadership have a responsibility to ensure that there is equitable distribution, which has not been a cultural norm or practice. S. Brown (2012) believes the fundamental factor in reshaping culture is how well senior leadership consistently model good practices. Dougherty, Jones, Natow, Pheatt, and

Reddy (2016) argue that senior institutional leadership are more interested in funding and have less of an awareness about how the institution's bottom line is affected by student outcomes in comparison to college staff and administrators with less leadership authority.

The administrators interviewed discussed the concern regarding the high cost of tuition and the concern that underrepresented college students without resources are at a more significant disadvantage to pursue their education and graduate from college. Some of the administrators discussed how they are forced to prioritize resources and expenditures while simultaneously develop new strategies to balance the budget and consider new alternatives to maintain funding for their specific programs. According to Kezar and Eckel (2002), it is essential to understand the current and previous history of an organization to properly allocate resources to make the necessary changes considering institutional cultures and contexts.

Administrators shared on numerous occasions that funding was not stable and there was not enough funding, which created concern about offering scholarships to recruit and retain underrepresented college students and sustain their programs. Powell (2017) supports the notion that systemic inequity goes beyond dollars for students but built out of the barriers like inadequate funding. In agreement with Young and Brooks (2008), raising leadership's awareness hopefully will enable them to meet the financial needs of the programs better to ensure the delivery of services to meet the needs of underrepresented college students, often viewed as marginalized. Ledesma and Calderón (2015) report that institutional finances affect marginalized communities at a higher rate than White communities. CRT, according to M. E. Allen (2015), "supports that without a commitment of redesigning policies and funding, racial progress cannot be made" (p. 4).

5.2.2 Implications of existing silos

Silos emerged as an institutional challenge for administrators. The common theme identified was that silos create restraints of organizational collaboration and information and resource sharing. In some instances, silos caused some administrators to experience a sense of isolation and exclusion. Powell (2017) suggests that to achieve equity in education, it is essential to welcome others into the circle to ensure all students have access to an excellent education. However, expanding the boundaries means pushing the paradigm of educational leadership. As administrators relate to how silos affected their work, they were able to identify how such silos impact underrepresented college students. Many universities experience issues of silos built around institutional functions, programs, and services fragmenting all levels within the institution. If higher education institutions and leaders focus and make students the priority, it is the assumption that silos could be minimized. However, this strongly suggests the engagement from senior leadership.

According to Powell (2017), embracing collective leadership can be empowering. This is to suggest that when administrators and leadership share their expertise, talents, information, and resources, this is an opportunity for them to become changemakers. Further, centralization and collaborative efforts, versus decentralization often caused by silos, create openings for greater advancement to include design thinking and learning. Powell also suggests the importance of working to build bridges, removing barriers, and valuing the stakeholders who impact our students.

As exposed through the literature and study findings, similarities in silos are apparent within today PWIs and other types of higher education institutions. Silos also play a central role in determining institutional structure on all levels. Administrators felt that institutional silos

impede efforts for organizational collaboration, information sharing, and relationship building. One administrator specifically stated that human nature seems to create a need for exercising power and having a death grip, unfortunately, making it difficult to break down the existing silos. It is noted that historically, the silo mentality and institutional infighting has been a part of higher education. Unfortunately, institutions have not been successful in eliminating or minimizing the silo mentality (Thorp & Goldstein, 2010).

5.2.3   Equitable resources and treatment are not always equal

Interestingly, concerns about equitable resources and fair treatment were expressed by the administrators interviewed. The concern of fairness was one of the emerging themes and connected directly with the guiding theory of CRT regarding issues relating to unfair treatment, injustice, freedom from unconscious bias, and favoritism as mentioned in the study and literature. According to Mann (2014), equitable treatment could be defined as equal access to resources.

Some middle- and senior-level administrators seem to question the institutional priority of funding and resources to support underrepresented students. For instance, administrators working directly with underrepresented students seem to feel they did not receive adequate or comparable resources in comparison to other programs and areas. Through suggestive comments from some administrators, indirectly race and racism were factors in equitable treatment and fairness. Referencing Ledesma and Calderón (2015), this could be an example of CRT's view about how racism is being embedded in the higher education culture where institutional practices may demonstrate covert behaviors and overt actions. Milner (2017) argues that "unfortunately, racism undermines this system of meritocracy, and those in power tend not to acknowledge or

understand the generational privileges and resources that they benefit from historically and presently" (p. 298).

Some administrators appear to believe that, like underrepresented students; they too should receive the same equitable treatment, support, and fair distribution of university resources to build their programs which ultimately promote success of underrepresented college students. Two administrators insinuated that underrepresented students did not have the same opportunities as other students, and it was the institution's responsibility to ensure equitable treatment. As equitable treatment presents a concern, Milner (2017) writes:

> A CRT theory perspective would suggest that the ability, will, and fortitude of White people to negotiate or make difficult decisions in providing more equitable policies and practices to benefit those who are not White might mean that they lose something of great importance to them, including their power, privilege, esteem, social status, linguistic status, and ability to reproduce these benefits in interests to others like them. (p. 298)

However, the literature suggests that administrators regardless of race, gender, and culture should not be discriminated against because of identity. One administrator of color referenced that she felt her race not only created implicit bias, but at times she felt that because of her identity as a woman of color she was not valued, misunderstood, and on occasion, her input was dismissed. Sun (2014) also states that one can look at equitable matters as systemic obstacles requiring the engagement of equitable practices. As equitable resources and fair treatment are assessed to promote the success of underrepresented students of color, it is equally important to assess how PWIs ensure equitable resources and fair treatment for administrators, specifically those of color to promote their productivity, opportunity for advancement, and sense of value. It is equally important to incorporate open dialogue within classrooms but also to

incorporate learning outcomes within campus programming that discuss power, privilege, and discrimination. Likewise, Kim (2014) implies that to foster equity and inclusiveness environment requires good intentions from many persons to foster an institutional system that provides equal access and resources for all people.

5.2.4   Social challenges create institutional discrimination and implicit bias

Observed by some of the administrators, social challenges such as discrimination also played a role in how perception and practices are formulated by the university and faculty members. Another barrier within the social challenges includes implicit bias. Administrators experienced concern regarding underrepresented college students experiencing forms of discrimination and implicit bias by White faculty and other students who perceived underrepresented college students as being incompetent, because of test scores, race, and quantitative aptitude. Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) confirm that students of color often encounter forms of microaggressions, experience differential treatment, and are stereotyped by faculty and others based on negative perceptions. In this polarized society, students of color consistently encounter adverse experiences because of negative stereotypes, which is common among people of color.

Gooblar (2017) argues that most behaviors are driven by unconscious attitudes and stereotypes and that people may also have implicit biases. As implicit biases were noted, the concern of further investigation centered on changing the views of the institution, faculty, and other students. The middle- and senior-level administrators interviewed associated implicit bias with stereotypes. Gooblar shows how implicit bias can become the default attitude to uphold stereotypes. For instance, if marginalized groups struggle academically, when others encounter a student from that group there is a tendency to stereotype automatically. This was evident as one

faculty member refers to underrepresented college students who did not have strong quantitative backgrounds and scores experienced bias from faculty and other students and often were excluded and viewed as being incompetent.

Simson (2014) states that "improper racial stereotypes and implicit bias continue to distort our perception and evaluation of other's behaviors, and negatively affect our decision making regarding how to respond to instances of what the majority considers inappropriate behaviors" (p. 562). Implicit bias is inevitable, as a result, acts of racism occur when people allow their inherent prejudices, which often are their truths, to influence adverse actions towards someone else. To combat implicit bias and prejudices, we as higher education professionals must put forth a concerted effort to implement positive change. However, for change to occur, we must acknowledge that colorblindness and post-racialism exist, and that bias is a not a moral issue but rather an act of human failure (Harris, 2010).

The evidence of improper racial stereotypes and implicit bias as human failing is demonstrated in the scenario of the African American male college student who encounters a form of racism and discrimination by a White faculty member because of this own prejudiced view. Because of the White faculty member's own ethnocentric bias, he viewed the African American student in a negative light and was quick also to label the student.

Two middle-level administrators of color gave claim to experiencing implicit bias. One administrator indicated the implicit bias experienced was associated with her being a black female. On the other hand, the male administrator referenced that the implicit bias he experienced was associated with his size and race. This aligns with Mims (1981) referencing that minority administrators are confronted with the challenges to survive and prove themselves in settings traditionally insensitive, unresponsive, and unreceptive to minority administrators. Often

the experiences of the administrators of color are like that of the underrepresented students they recruit and support.

5.2.5 Checking the boxes and formality are standard practices

Consensus, based on the interviews conducted and the data collected, reflects that engagement of diversity and inclusion is a matter of checking the box, which means doing the bare minimum rather than going the extra mile to build positive multicultural relationships, cultural competence, and favorable campus climate. Greater institutional efforts are essential to diversity and inclusion to promote engagement and a sense of belonging. The university must have good intentions and strategies in place when considering diversity and inclusion; therefore, the act of engagement is essential. As cultural competence is considered, it helps to cultivate diversity and inclusion. To ensure the implementation and cultivation of diversity and inclusion within the academic environment, it requires collaborative efforts of institutional colleagues to work together and for individuals to recognize their personal biases and prejudices, which is the goal of doing the personal work to further advance the institution's overall efforts to promote diversity and inclusion (Martin & Vaughn, 2015). Equally, "it is essential to examine representational equity, and it is also essential to document other dimensions of institutional diversity that contribute to campus climate, including perceptions, and behaviors among individuals and groups, and organizational practices across units" (Hurtado, & Halualani, 2014, p. 3).

The administrators interviewed further discussed how across the institution, more administrators, staff, and faculty should get involved in leading diversity and inclusion and participate in professional development to better understand and work with colleagues and underrepresented and minority students they teach and interact with. Also, "given that most

institutional efforts on diversity and inclusion are generated outside of the faculty, a shift may be needed to empower faculty with the knowledge and authority to initiate this change" (Elliott et al., 2013, p. 8). Because of the nature of diversity and equity training, some leaders, faculty, and administrators are not equipped or experienced. Mayo and Larke (2009) contend that professional development can be an essential component. Such training can lead to vigorous multi-perspective critical thinking and learning environments that affirm and push forward a more diverse and inclusive environment.

5.2.6   Administrators' perspectives regarding race and racism

Several similarities regarding race and racism are apparent at various organizational levels within PWIs. This is not uncommon. As Brooks and Watson (2018) note, scholars and practitioners have confirmed that racism impedes not only student achievement but the effectiveness of educators and institutional community. The concern regarding race and racism are notably addressed through the administrators' comments. Race and racism are identified as an overarching factor at this PWI. Emphasis was placed on the need for the institution to address how race and racism affect the overall culture of the institution. Like other authors, Banks (2013) also confirms that race and racism exist in all aspects of education and is not an endemic to U.S. society. Minimizing racism to the conceptual status of race is difficult considering that racism is motivated by actions such as educational segregation and labor discrimination rather than concepts. As cited by Edwards (2017), in two key studies (Sue & Sue, 2013; Utley, Bolden, & Brown, 2001), researchers contend that institutional racism is prevalent with a dominance of prejudice and discrimination, which creates access and privilege for those having power and superiority, while limiting access and creating intentional barriers for those perceived as inferior

because of race. CRT challenges the impact of race and racism and its effects on social structures, practices, and discourse (Yosso, 2005).

Furthermore, racism can also be viewed as the underlying cause associated with access, silos, unfair treatment, equitable resources, discrimination, and bias. To remove or neutralize institutional racism requires transforming the culture (Law, Phillips, & Turney, 2004). To transform the culture requires addressing the actual underlying dynamics that influence the persistence of racism (Coughlin & Messenlehner, 2017).

During the interviews, a reoccurring concern among three middle-level administrators was that the university should recruit and hire more faculty of color to foster a richer diverse culture and learning environment to help underrepresented students identify with their own self-image. The administrators interviewed were hopeful about the hiring of more faculty of color. Unfortunately, this has not been the common practice at this PWI. Harvey (1999) states that at PWIs, the action taken by the senior leadership to increase diversity can raise equity. Such action to recruit and hire more faculty of color increases cynicism and frustration among supporters and non-supporters. Consequently, Brown (2012) emphasizes, the fundamental factor of reshaping the institutional culture is how well the senior leadership consistently model good practices.

5.2.7 Senior institutional leadership and the support they provide

According to Jackson (1988), school leaders, influence institutional racism and equally are influenced by racism. More specifically, "racism is manifested in relation to leadership at individual, dyadic, subcultural, institutional, and societal levels" (Brooks & Watson, 2018, p. 11). Some of the administrators interviewed confirmed that some of the senior institutional leaders who were with the university for many years were ineffective and tended to dismiss and

avoid confronting issues relating to race and appeared to lack awareness regarding institutional race issues. Furthermore, "educational leadership that focuses on race while also affording primacy to the broader space of social justice must include a call for critical self-reflection. However, self-reflection that does not involve transformative actions is impractical" (Gooden & Dantley, 2012, p. 242). Because leadership influences the academic environment, it is advantageous that leaders take the opportunity for self-reflection regarding their attitudes, behaviors, and biases. Further, multiple studies (Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Rivera-McCutchen & Watson, 2014; Shields, 2010; Watson & Rivera-McCutchen, 2016) cited by Brooks and Watson (2018) found the following:

> For institutional leaders then, unlearning the miseducation about race likely means increasing awareness of their own relationship with racism, looking at the forms of privilege from which they benefit and behaviors from which they may suffer, it will also mean developing the skills to have difficult conversations about race with students, staff, and community members, skills seldom taught for educational leaders. (p. 7)

It is evident that there remains additional work for institutional leaders to pursue before they can strategically evaluate, challenge, and seek new approaches to address institutional racism (Brooks & Watson, 2018).

In contrast to the administrators stating that some of the senior institutional leadership did not address race issues, some of the administrators mutually agreed that new senior leaders at various institutional levels were taking a new approach to implementing change regarding diversity and inclusion initiatives and were receptive to new ideas and collaboration. Anyamele (2005) emphasizes quality improvement is driven by leadership. Based on observation and comments from the administrators, unlike some of the former senior leaders, new senior

institutional leadership are addressing concerns around campus climate, injustices, and inequalities associated with the unfair treatment of individuals and programs.

Leadership using best practices to support the efforts of administrators to serve underrepresented college students is encouraging. Buckley (2012) emphasizes that the best way to allow administrators and staff to develop and learn is to give them the mechanisms to share experiences, best practices, and to improve their capabilities and skills. This also supports minimizing institutional silos to become more centralized rather than decentralized. Further, the institutional leadership, "like higher education overall, must build a culture of learning that allows for continuous knowledge creation and transformation" (Sallis & Jones, 2002, p. 77). As we look at institutional transformation, it begins with the leadership setting priorities in determining the course of action that emphasizes effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability Anyamele (2005).

5.3   SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study intended to gain greater insight into the perspectives of middle- and senior-level administrators and the challenges affecting their work to support underrepresented college students. In the process, the study uncovered how racism and senior leadership influence and affect the institutional system, administrators, and students, specifically those of color. Regardless of the administrators' level of position or ethnicity, the administrators were all cognizant that race and the attitudes and behaviors of senior leadership not only influence but define the social and cultural norms of the university. Some administrators, like underrepresented

college students, often encountered institutional barriers affecting their ability regarding how they functioned within the institutional system and advocated for their programs and services.

If institutions seek to implement new changes and initiatives to have a more inclusive campus environment, it is important that senior institutional leadership address issues of resource allocations silos, implicit biases, racism, equitable resources and treatment historically embedded within the institutional system on all levels. Also, administrators have a desire to share their insight, experiences, and expertise to build a stronger internal pipeline and structure conducive to engagement for the administrators and underrepresented students.

Regardless of the dedication of administrators to support underrepresented college students, leaders ultimately must be held accountable for ongoing change to occur. Change can only happen when senior institutional leaders intentionally include minority-based support programs as part of the institutional strategic plan rather than just a formality or another add-on.

As the face of the student population continues to become more ethnic and racially diverse to include an increase in underrepresented student populations, leaders must reassess their priorities not only of the programs and services available to underrepresented college students but also how to ensure that administrators, specifically those of color, feel included rather than excluded. In summary, senior institutional leaders play an important role and have a responsibility to identify and understand what factors facilitate barriers to cultivate, shape, and foster inclusivity.

5.4   IMPLICATION FOR RESEARCH

This study, being of exploratory and interpretive nature, has implications for research to explore further and gain a better understanding on how race, racism, and senior leadership—the underlying factors influencing institutional systems—create barriers for administrators, specifically those supporting and serving underrepresented college students through minority-based programs at PWIs. Based on the findings of this study, the following seven implications are addressed below:

The first implication for research concerns the lack of resource allocation to support minority-based programs. Uspuriene, Sakalauskas, and Dumskis (2017) confirm that all educational institutions experience financial problems; therefore, institutions should consider what options are available for planning revenues and expenses. Further research is needed to understand better and determine how the lack of resource allocations affect minority-based programs and generate issues of inequities. A systemic study is needed that would assess the overall institutional practices used to allocate funding and what guidelines are implemented to ensure equal distribution and equity for minority-based programs.

The second implication for research relates to the existence of silos. It was identified that silos exist across the university and often generate territorial control, feelings of isolation, and exclusion among personnel of color. Brown (2017) states the following regarding silos:

Engagement cross multiple silos will be a challenge given that the established norms, values, and cultures of individuals silos have existed for decades. Solutions to ideological tensions must move past the within-silo paradigms and consider the accountability discourses occurring in other fields if the sector is to begin to identify a "proper kind" of accountability. (p. 53)

Further research is needed to explore the long-term consequences that silos have on staff, faculty, and students of color, and what institutional leaders are doing to minimize decentralization and racial exclusion. Such a study may examine institutional structures to better evaluate if current silos are intentionally designed to exclude people of color from the overall organization and from one another.

The third implication for research concerns equitable resources and fair treatment within PWIs. In equitability and unfair treatment exists within the minority-based programs that serve and support underrepresented students of color. According to Thompson and Neville (1999), sociologist Mark Chesler argues that institutional and systemic racism that practice forms of superiority and power create opportunities, advantages, and privileges for select groups while simultaneously excluding other racial minority groups. Although the current literature addresses the impact of inequity and unfair treatment on underrepresented students of color, the current literature does not address the effect that inequitable and unfair treatment specifically have on administrators who directly serve and support underrepresented college students in minority-based programs. Further research is needed to understand better how inequity and unfair treatment create disparities and affect minority-based programs.

The fourth implication for research concerns how implicit bias and discrimination creates stereotyping which is inevitable and experienced by administrators, staff, and students of color. Sommer and Lucek (2015) state that according to research, when people are exposed to counter-stereotypes and encouraged to resist stereotypes, this ultimately can diminish an individual's implicit bias. Also, "stereotypes make it much harder for people to see qualities in others that go against the ideas they already hold about a certain group of people" (Sommer & Lucek, 2015, para. 4). An examination of how PWIs are addressing issues and patterns of implicit bias and

discrimination is needed to understand better how implicit bias, discrimination, and stereotypes affect administrators and their ability to be productive and maintain positive self-identity. Further research would be valuable in and of itself to help PWIs take a closer look at implementing best practices and professional development programs to focus on cultural competency to minimize implicit bias and discrimination.

The fifth implication for research concerns diversity and inclusion not being institutional priorities. Without adequately defining diversity and inclusion initiatives, it is difficult for PWIs to engage and carry out efforts of diversity and inclusion as institutional priorities. There is a need to assess further how institutions incorporate diversity and inclusion initiatives as a part of the institutional strategic plan and mission statement. Elliott et al., (2013) confirm that case studies conducted reveal some positive institutional outcomes relating to institutional efforts to embrace diversity and inclusion through programs, events, and services. However, further research is needed to analyze why diversity and inclusion are not institutional priorities, and what is the effectiveness of diversity and inclusion when institutional leaders implement such efforts.

The sixth implication for research concerns race and institutional racism. The literature suggests that institutional racism is a structural system that is supported and benefits those of power and privilege (Hughes, 2014). Furthermore, "racial realities remain undisposed and unaddressed in systematic ways on college campuses" (Harper & Hurtado, 2007, p. 20). Limited studies exist on how race and racism within the institutional system affect administrators directly. Hurtado and Halualani (2014) suggest that it is essential to document the efforts of diversity contributing to institutional practices, campus climate, perceptions, and behaviors of individuals and groups. Further research is needed to understand better not only the perspective

of the administrators but also how race and racism influence the overall institutional system and inflict disparities, inequalities, and inequities within minority-based programs.

The final implication for research is the influence that institutional leadership has on the institutional system and culture. It is the assumption that some institutional leaders are considering approaches for institutional transformation. However, "higher education transformation, from a sensemaking perspective, requires more leaders and participants, not fewer" (Eckel & Kezar, 2003, p. 16). Eckel and Kezar (2003) also suggest that when assessing institutional change, it is vital for senior leadership to consciously seek to develop new strategies resulting in a change from old ideas and assumptions once practiced. Future research is needed to determine how senior leaders are preparing to build a more inclusive environment and minimize an institutional system influenced by race, racism, and discrimination.

In summary, because the current literature and research studies are limited on the perspectives and experiences of middle- and senior-level administrators and the systemic institutional barriers in which affect their efforts to support underrepresented college students at PWIs, the implications based on the findings of this study create an opportunity for future research. Because the current research literature is limited regarding the perspectives of middle- and senior-level administrators at PWIs, this study contributes to the current literature expanding the research and shedding light on how the three dominant overarching factors: race, racism, and senior institutional leadership influence all hierarchical levels within the institutional system. Although this was a qualitative study, to advance the research further, the utilization of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies can provide a comprehensive perspective of the experiences of administrators who support and serve underrepresented college students at PWIs. The implementation of quantitative studies can chart broader patterns that emerge from

qualitative studies. On the other hand, qualitative studies could look at institutional leaders who are not recognized as diversity champions and see how the champions' perspectives of themselves play out in their own view. Additionally, qualitative studies could explore how such champions advocate for institutional change to promote equity and fairness for people of color and diversity and inclusion

5.5   IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Based on the research study and gaining greater insight regarding the perceptions of the middle- and senior-level administrators, there is a clear concern that the university does not have a balanced, inclusive campus climate. Subsequently, this is affecting not only students of color but also the administrators who directly are responsible for serving and supporting this student population. Although the intention of "good nature" was present among the administrators interviewed, and each demonstrated a commitment to support underrepresented students through the academic programs and services designed for these students, effort to employ intentional practices driven by specific strategies remains an issue.

Race and racism continue to influence senior institutional leaders. To support the current research, Harper and Hurtado (2007) document that without adequately examining the current campus climate it is difficult to implement change with the intent to promote satisfaction among racially ethnic minority students and institutional inclusiveness. Without addressing the issues of race and racism, there will remain a level of dissatisfaction and perception that PWIs have toxic environments.

Because senior institutional leadership and racism were identified as the over-arching factors influencing the institutional system, it is crucial for senior leadership to seek opportunities to uncover some of the underlying truths about institutional racism and to confront such issues campus-wide with effective diversity and inclusion initiatives. To further study race, racism, and institutional leadership is an opportunity for institutions to reassess policies and procedures to ensure fair treatment for faculty, staff, and students of color.

Although the findings from the study showed that on-campus diversity and inclusion training was apparent, further assessment is needed to identify specific comprehensive training and professional development not only for the administrators that work and support underrepresented college students but also for all other administrators, leaders, staff, faculty, and students in order to extend the boundaries of many dispelled biases, encourage collaboration, and minimize decentralization and silos. Because of new leadership at the senior level and the presence of new attitudes and approaches, these new conditions may inspire the university to proceed in the direction for creating an environment that encourages positive change.

Further, what has been an institutional problem of not recruiting and hiring more faculty of color should be addressed and become one of the goals of the institutional strategic plan. If budgetary issues do not allow for hiring more faculty of color and funding programs and services which support underrepresented students, the institutions should assess how administrators and faculty may obtain special training around cultural competency intending to integrate the skills in and outside of the classroom. Without adequate funding to support the programs, ultimately, the students are hindered in their development and progress.

To implement change requires the engagement and direction from senior institutional leadership. However, for change to occur, to break the cycle of racism, and to promote

inclusivity involves also a change in the behaviors and attitudes of senior leadership. Further, change can only begin to occur when senior institutional leadership recognizes they have a responsibility to address institutional racism to foster an inclusive academic environment and campus climate. It also requires a shift in campus dynamics, climate, and culture reflective of race awareness and social action.

Table 1. University of Pittsburgh Administrators Participating in the Study

Participants	Gender	Race	Years in Current Position	Administrator Level
#1	Male	White	38	Senior
#2	Male	Minority	15	Middle
#3	Female	Minority	3	Senior
#4	Female	White	3	Senior
#5	Male	Minority	7	Middle
#6	Male	White	4.5	Senior
#7	Female	Minority	11	Middle
#8	Male	Minority	13	Senior
#9	Male	White	7.5	Middle
#10	Female	White	10	Middle

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE CODING CYCLE

Table 2. What are the perceptions of administrators regarding the work they do to support underrepresented college students?

Interview Questions	Open Coding – 1st Cycle	Relationship – 2nd Cycle
Q2, Q3, Q4	Academic and professional development Creating Safe Space Creating experiences to promote success Identify opportunities for engagement Improving programs Collaboration Feeling of acceptance Increasing minority enrollment Voices Heard Exposure to learning and new concepts Achieving purpose	Supporting students to promote academic and social development Student outcomes Recruitment and retention Diversity, inclusion, equity Encouragement Engagement Sense of belonging
Q12	Institutional awareness of its location and neighbors Awareness Crush stereotypes Major units have diversity officers Diversity and inclusion integrated versus added Creating home feeling environment Meeting academic goals and objectives Increase in leadership, faculty and staff of color Role modeling of faculty of color Focus on holistic review Increase in funding	Catalyst for change Stereotypes Leadership Increase diversity and inclusion Financial Resources Role modeling

Q11	Internally have all the support Annually national conference Afforded opportunities to get training on a professional level Conferenced relevant to diversity Career worth of experiences - leadership workshops, and speaker series	Professional development Leadership support of development
Q13	Rewarding opportunity Helping students succeed Work to be done Challenging Making a difference Meaningful work Walking the walk	Commitment Dedication Challenging Meaningful

APPENDIX C

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO CODING CYCLE

Table 3. What institutional systems, services, and programs are supporting the success of underrepresented college students?

Interview Questions	Open Coding – 1st Cycle	Relationship – 2nd Cycle
Q8	Connect and engage communities Voice at table to drive understanding Identify best practices Pitt Excel Program Ensure institutional culture is more inclusive Working with admissions and student affairs Creating home environment for students Educating workforce to prepare for change in demographics Make pipeline more durable for students of color Retention programs Creating safety net Positive campus climate	Engagement Inclusiveness Sense of belonging Retention Faculty biases Campus climate
Q9	Community building space Diversifying our experiences Great team caring about students Student Affairs does great work Accessibility to students Connection to internal and external resources Most retention student success focused Provide risk free environment to learn	Commitment Support system Student outcomes Partnerships Available resources Inclusion Retention

Q10	Allow students to integrate with each other Engagement on every level Incorporating cultural competence and appreciation for difference in orientation Creating committees Faculty commitment to diversity programs Excel Program extended to include both underrepresented and all other students	Inclusiveness Integrity Engagement Embracing difference Equity and inclusion Diversity Sense of belonging

APPENDIX D

RESEARCH QUESTION THREE CODING CYCLE

Table 4. What facilitates challenges for administrators as they work to support underrepresented college students?

Interview Questions	Open Coding – 1st Cycle	Relationship – 2nd Cycle
Q5	Lack of diversity Latinos underrepresented Not enough emphasis on inclusion, diversity, and equity Financial resources Implicit biases Lack of warm campus climate Lack of faculty of color Bias toward quantitative skills	Bias Diversity Inclusion Equity
Q5a	Leadership knows of institutional barriers faced by students Aware of some barriers Working to minimize barriers Institution has turned a corner Institution made great stride Sometimes not well University doesn't do enough	Barriers Deficits Institutional change
Q5b	Society is so statistically oriented Not enough emphasis on inclusion Silos Decentralization nature of the institution Self-perpetuating myth of the meritocracy Policy and politics	Silos Bias Lack of minority faculty Politics Listening

	Hearing narratives especially when critical Unwillingness to listen when it feels uncomfortable Lack of hiring faculty of color Standardized test scores Implicit bias	
Q5c	Collaboration piece is strong Open and honest dialogue about difficult topics The creation of the Office of Diversity Inclusion New Chancellor committing at the highest level for student success management	Catalyst for change Commitment Collaboration
Q5d	Offer peer sessions Practices and models are very intentional Institutions must be responsible and responsive in meeting student needs Partnership with the Division of Student Affairs on cross cultural leadership development Creating spaces and opportunity for students Talking with students about their experiences New leadership; in great transition Holistic programming and in-time intervention Working together on problems	Engagement Best Practices Intervention Collaboration
Q6	University is huge Too many layers of people Battled instantaneous reactions of various uncleanliness judgmental zones Silos Institutional turf wars and territorialism There is a hierarchy Lack of financial resources Past leadership unwilling to deal with race issues Lack of information sharing	Institutional complexities Bias Financial resources Silos
Q6a	I honestly don't think it does Absolutely Structural wise no - but how humans behave within this structure and that is the issue Individual biases on campus Racism is everywhere It is very subjective Often, it's covert, intentional, and ignorance	Racism Bias
Q7	No energy to tackle the administrative system Personally, I have not found myself in any corners Challenges can be more interpersonal Affecting accountability and the ability to set goals Affected me to make change Implicit bias	Silos Bias Challenges

	Judgement on equity, diversity, and inclusion Silos don't allow for getting out to make change Take away time from investing in projects Our leadership in this school does not like making people feel uncomfortable.	
Q7a	Focus on minority K-12, women and gay populations Training for people and faculty with direct interaction working with students Pipeline programs from K-12 to undergraduate Ensure units have dedicated funding Attract, hire, and retain minority faculty Promote our students Attempt to address issues related to implicit biases	Implementation of change Financial resources Diversity and inclusion Minority faculty Training and development Cultural competence

APPENDIX E

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Table 5. Defining characteristics of the seven emerging themes

Resource Allocation	Silos	Equitable Resources and Treatment	Institutional Discrimination and Implicit Bias	Diversity and Inclusion	Race and Racism	Institutional Leadership
Emphasis given to fiscal resources	Emphasis given to partnerships and opportunities to connect with other administrators	Emphasis given to faculty bias on quantitative scores and developmental needs of students	Faculty-Emphasis given to quantitative scores and specific development need of students	Emphasis given to programs and workshops for administrators, faculty, staff, and students	Emphasis given to hiring minority faculty	Emphasis given to avoidance to address racial issues
Emphasis given to staffing and human resources	Emphasis given to minority administrators and ability to interact and engage with peers	Emphasis given to equitability for departments, programs, and students	Emphasis given to how discrimination and bias affects socialization for students	Emphasis given to formality rather than implementation of best practices	Emphasis given to bias towards administrators and underrepresented students	Emphasis given to address race, diversity, inclusion - catalyst for change
Emphasis given to time	Emphasis given to location/modality	Emphasis given to providing access and equitable opportunities to students	Emphasis given to covert treatment because of race and gender	Emphasis given to awareness and effect of diversity and inclusion		

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTIONS

1. How long have you been with the University of Pittsburgh and in your current position?
2. What leadership role do you have at your university?
   (a) How does it relate to providing support, programs, or services to underrepresented students of color, such as African-American and Latino students?
3. What purposes and needs are these programs designed to serve?
4. How well do they achieve these purposes?
5. What have you identified as the key institutional barriers affecting underrepresented students of color, specifically African Americans and Latinos?
   (a) How well does the institution understand the barriers facing these students?
   (b) What are some of the institutional complexities or challenges that make it difficult to address the barriers?
   (c) From your perspective, how is Pitt attempting to transcend institutional change campus-wide to address the key barriers?
   (d) In your current role, how are you addressing the current barriers within your unit (or university) to ensure underrepresented students of color have a holistic academic experience?
6. As an administrator, what are some of the challenges which affect your efforts to serve underrepresented African American and Latino undergraduate students because of institutional barriers?
   (a) Do you believe race or racism is a factor?
7. From your perspective, how have the institutional barriers affected your capability to create institutional change to better serve underrepresented students of color?
   (a) What would you like to do if you had all the resources and support to do it?
8. Next, I would like to ask you a series of questions. As we are aware, research suggests that over the next ten years the enrollment of underrepresented student populations into PWIs will increase. First, what can you tell me about how, from your perspective, what is your unit (or university) doing to prepare for the shift to demonstrate greater inclusiveness for underrepresented students?

9. What are the strengths in creating more inclusiveness for these students?
10. What opportunities are being used to create more inclusiveness for these students?
11. What type of professional development opportunities, formal, or informal supports are available to support your efforts in developing the capacity for this work?
12. What would you like to see done differently over the next five years in your unit (or university) to encourage greater inclusiveness for underrepresented students?
13. What else would you like to share with me regarding your experiences serving the underrepresented student population or your role as an administrator?

IRB

University of Pittsburgh
Institutional Review Board

<u>Memorandum</u>

To: Lynnette Redd

From: IRB Office

Date: 2/15/2018

IRB#:   <u>PRO18010148</u>

Subject: Institutional Barriers Affecting the Academic and Social Development of Underrepresented College Students: Perspectives of Administrators

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The above-referenced project has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board. Based on the information provided, this project meets all the necessary criteria for an exemption, and is hereby designated as "exempt" under section

45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)

Please note the following information:

- Investigators should consult with the IRB whenever questions arise about whether planned changes to an exempt study might alter the exempt status. Use the **"Send Comments to IRB Staff"** link displayed on study workspace to request a review to ensure it continues to meet the exempt category.
- It is important to close your study when finished by using the **"Study Completed"** link displayed on the study workspace.
- Exempt studies will be archived after 3 years unless you choose to extend the study. If your study is archived, you can continue conducting research activities as the IRB has made the determination that your project met one of the required exempt categories. The only caveat is that no changes can be made to the application. If a change is needed, you will need to submit a NEW Exempt application.

Please be advised that your research study may be audited periodically by the University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office.

INDIVIDUAL CONSENT HANDOUT

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to explore how institutional barriers affect the work of higher education administrators in their efforts to promote the academic and social development of underrepresented African American and Latino undergraduate college students attending predominantly white institutions (PWIs). Barriers impeding underrepresented students of color has been studied at some PWIs. However, limited studies have focused on the institutional barriers that may create challenges as administrators attempt to serve this student population in PWI settings. Using a range of methodologies (i.e. face-to-face interviews and document analysis), this study aims to describe the perceptions and experiences of higher education administrators. My goal is to gather information that can improve institutional systems to foster a more inclusive academic environment to support administrators and students.
If you agree to participate, you will participate in a one-on-one confidential interview (approximately 40 minutes).

RISKS

Participants are asked to participate in a one-on-one confidential interview. This activity will not be any more risky than daily interactions experienced as part of the participant's professional life. Breach of confidentiality is a possible risk. However, precautions regarding confidentiality are taken to protect participants' privacy. Participants may withdraw from the study at any point or choose not to answer questions.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in how higher education staff are involved in strategic planning. Possible general benefits are that information gathered may improve institutional systems and the work of administrators in their effort to serve underrepresented students of colors.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The PI and faculty mentor will maintain confidentiality throughout the study. All researcher memos, interview transcripts, audio recordings, and participant data will be in a locked cabinet and/or stored on Pitt Box, with only the researchers allowed access. After agreeing to be interviewed, participants will be assigned both a pseudonym and an ID number for cross reference throughout the study. These pseudonyms and ID numbers will be used in place of participants' actual names and identifying information, and only researchers will have access to the identification key. ID numbers will link data from interviews; however, neither the numbers nor participant names will be used in any publications or presentations. Where necessary, references to participants or other individuals will be made with pseudonyms. In addition, pseudonyms will be used for XXX and all its colleges, schools, and other administrative units.
The University of Pittsburgh Research Conduct and Compliance Office may have access to the research data for monitoring. In unusual cases, research records may be released in response to an order from a court of law.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time and. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT

This study is being conducted by:
• Lynnette A. Redd, EdD student at the University of Pittsburgh. She may be reached at 304-382-4312 or lar115@pitt.edu for questions or to report a research-related problem.
•Dr. Michael Gunzenhauser is the Faculty Mentor for this study. Dr. Gunzenhauser may be reached at 412-648-2119 or mgunzen@pitt.edu for questions or to report a research-related problem.

You may contact the University of Pittsburgh Human Subject Protection Advocate at 1-866-212-2668 if you have questions regarding your rights as a participant in the research

APPENDIX I

VERBAL CONSENT SCRIPT

Prior to beginning this interview, I need your verbal consent to participate in this research. If you agree, I would like to audiotape this interview to capture your perspective. I will save the recording on a password-protected drive, transcribe it, and delete the recording after the research study is completed. If you don't want to be recorded, I will not. The interview should last no longer than 40 minutes.

You are welcome to withdraw from the interview or not answer any interview questions.
Are you willing to participate in this face-to-face interview? Please respond with a verbal YES or NO._____

During this interview, I will be asking you about your perceptions and experiences as an administrator. When I write about or discuss any research findings, I will use pseudonyms to refer to XXX. For example, the XXX will become the University of Pittsburgh or Pitt.

I will also use pseudonyms to refer to interview participants. Would you like to select a pseudonym or would you like me to assign one to you? _____

RECRUITMENT EMAIL SCRIPT

From: Lynnette A. Redd

To:

Date:

Subject: Research study on institutional barriers affecting the work of administrators supporting underrepresented college students at predominantly white institutions

Dear_____,

My name is Lynnette Redd, and I am a doctoral student in the University of Pittsburgh's School of Education. As part of my dissertation, I am researching institutional barriers affecting underrepresented college students, specifically African Americans and Latinos attending predominantly white institutions (PWI) and the perception of administrators and challenges affecting their work to serve this population. I am inviting you to participate because of your position as an administrator at the University of Pittsburgh.

Participation in this research includes being interviewed by me for approximately 40 minutes. During the interview, I will ask about your perception and experiences with institutional barriers affecting your work to support students of color. Participation is voluntary, and all responses will be confidential. There will be no identifiable information collected during the interview. The data collected will develop recommendations to support the work of administrators and improve the college experience for students of color attending PWIs.

I will contact you in a few days to confirm your participation in the research and to schedule a convenient time to meet with you. To help facilitate and to familiarize you with the interview, I will forward a copy of the questions in advance. If you would like to contact me sooner or require additional information, please contact me at lar115@pitt.edu or 304-382-4312.

In advance, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lynnette A. Redd

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