

THE EXPERIENCES OF MULTIRACIAL AND BIRACIAL WOMEN SENIOR
AND MID-LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

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(Under the Direction of Chris Linder)

ABSTRACT

During the past 20 years, the number of women students, administrators, and faculty of color in higher education has increased (King & Gomez, 2008). Despite the increase, multiracial and biracial women remain underrepresented in senior leadership positions within higher education (Aguirre, 2000). To support multi/biracial women as they advance into senior leadership positions, higher education administrators must have a better understanding of their unique experiences. Research is one tool that can help administrators as they strive to support and promote multi/biracial women and create inclusive campus environments. Although research in higher education has previously explored the experiences of women of color in higher education (e.g., Nixon, 2016), there is limited research on the specific experiences of biracial and multiracial women higher education administrators. As a result, the existing research fails to represent and address the specific concerns and experiences of multi/biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions. The purpose of this study was to illuminate the unique experiences of multiracial and biracial women so that higher education administrators can create strategies that transform existing policy and practices, and if necessary create new structures and systems to better support and promote multi/biracial women administrators.

Grounded in Critical Race Feminism (Wing, 2003) and approached through a transformative paradigm using semi-structured interviews, this phenomenological study explored the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions within higher education. Participants for this study included nine individuals who self-identified as multiracial or biracial women in a senior or mid-level administrative position within a U.S. institution of higher education. Through semi-structured interviews, the participants shared their experiences as multi/biracial women in the workplace. The themes that emerged from the interviews include the saliency of race, experiences with race and racism, expectations, the impact of racism, challenging systems of oppression, and coping strategies. The broad workplace experiences have far-reaching implications for higher education administrators who seek to understand and support all multi/biracial women in their institutions.

INDEX WORDS: MULTIRACIAL WOMEN, HIGHER EDUCATION
 ADMINISTRATION, MONORACISM, SENIOR ADMINISTRATOR

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my participants and to all multi/biracial women working in higher education—our experiences are real and unique. We find ourselves straddling multiple spaces and walking in different worlds simultaneously. May this study be a tool that administrators use to dismantle the systems that ignore, invalidate, and hold us back.

To my mother, you are my rock. Your loving memory and spirit guide, uplift, and encourage me every day.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

During the past 20 years, the number of women students, administrators, and faculty of color in higher education has increased (King & Gomez, 2008). In 2008, 3.4 million women of color were enrolled in higher education (Kim, 2011). Of the 17 million undergraduate students enrolled in institutions of higher education in 2015, 6.4 million were Black, Hispanic, and Asian/Pacific Islander (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). One hundred thirty-two thousand were American Indian/Alaska Native (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). In 2015, 56% of undergraduate students and 58% of graduate students were women (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Between 2015 and 2026, the number of women enrolled in higher education is projected to increase by 16% for undergraduate students and 12% for graduate students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). In 2006, 13.6% of college presidencies were held by women of color (King & Gomez, 2008).

Although research in higher education previously explored the experiences of women of color in higher education (e.g., Britton, 2013; Gardner et al., 2014; Lutz et al., 2013; Mendenhall et al., 2016; Montas-Hunter, 2012; Nixon, 2016), there is limited research on the specific experiences of biracial and multiracial women in the academe. In fact, I did not find literature on multiracial and biracial women higher education administrators. I located a limited number of studies on multiracial/biracial students and campus professionals (e.g., Harris, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c; Museus, Yee, & Lambe, 2011; Renn, 2014). While scholars have explored the experiences of monoracial women of color administrators, they have failed to consider women administrators who fall outside of distinct racial categories. The lack of literature on multiracial

and biracial women in higher education administration is evidence of the monoracist systems in higher education research (Harris, 2017a; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Ricks, 2011). The existing literature on women administrators perpetuates a monoracial paradigm in which all women of color are essentialized into a monoracial narrative. A construct that is supported by White supremacy, monoracism is “a social system of psychological inequity where individuals who do not fit monoracial categories may be oppressed on systemic and interpersonal levels because of underlying assumptions and beliefs in singular, discrete racial categories” (Johnston & Nadal, 2010, p. 125). Despite the increase in the number of women of color (WOC) in higher education, multiracial and biracial women remain underrepresented in senior leadership positions (Aguirre, 2000). Table 1 shows the slow but significant increase in the percentage of women and individuals of color who served as college presidents between 1986 and 2006. However, the total number of respondents reporting multiple races was only 1.5% in 2006. Table 2 shows the distribution of senior administrators by all institution types in 2008. The total number of individuals reporting more than one race who served in a senior administrative position was less than 1%. Additionally, the overall percentage of women who served in senior administrative positions was less than men (44.6%).

In 2017, individuals from historically marginalized communities accounted for only 17% of all U.S. college and university presidents (Gagliard et al., 2017). Of all the respondents in the 2017 American College President Study, 8% were African American, 4% were Hispanic, 2% were Asian American, and 3% identified as either Middle Eastern, American Indian, or as multiple races (Gagliard et al., 2017). Within the most represented racial/ethnic groups that accounted for college and university presidents of color, 33.9% were African American women and 21.7% were Hispanic women (Gagliard et al., 2017). This is a decrease from the percentage

Table 1.

Characteristics of College Presidents: 2006 and 1986

	2006	1986
Demographics	%	%
Women	23.0	9.5
African American	5.9	5.0
Hispanic	4.6	2.2
Asian American	0.9	0.4
American Indian	0.7	0.5
Other/Multiple race	1.5	NA
All minority	13.6	8.1
Aged 50 or younger	8.1	41.6
Aged 51 or 60	42.6	44.4
Aged 61 or older	49.3	13.9
Career History		
Promoted to presidency internally	27.6	27.0
Faculty experience	68.9	75.0
Average years in current position	8.5	6.3

NA = not available

Note. Details may not add up to totals due to rounding. Adapted from *On the Pathway to the Presidency: Characteristics of Higher Education's Senior Leadership*, by J. E. King and G. G. Gomez, 2008 (Report No. 311685), Washington, DC: American Council on Education. Copyright 2008 by the American Council of Education. Used with permission.

Table 2.

Characteristics of Senior Administrators: All Institution Types

	Chief of Staff	Executive Vice President	CAO / Provost	Central Senior Academic Affairs Officer	Dean of Academic College	Senior Administrative Officer	Senior External Affairs Officer	Chief Student Affairs or Enrollment Management Officer	Chief Diversity Officer	Total
Race/Ethnicity	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
White	83.3	79.8	90.5	85.0	85.8	87.0	89.8	79.7	17.6	84.2
African American	9.0	12.3	5.0	7.6	7.2	8.2	5.4	13.3	59.0	9.3
Asian American	1.7	1.9	1.9	1.8	2.8	1.2	0.3	0.8	4.5	1.6
American Indian	0.6	0.0	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.4	3.9	0.4
Hispanic	5.5	6.0	2.4	4.6	2.4	2.8	4.1	5.4	13.2	4.0
Other / Multiple races	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	1.3	0.4	0.2	0.3	1.7	0.5
Gender										
Female	54.7	31.0	38.0	50.3	35.5	42.9	49.1	45.4	55.6	44.6
Male	45.3	69.0	62.0	49.7	64.5	57.1	50.9	54.6	44.4	55.4
Age										
≤ 50 years	30.5	13.1	19.4	29.7	25.8	37.4	44.0	45.1	50.5	34.0
51-60 years	45.7	66.4	51.8	48.3	50.2	47.9	41.3	42.8	34.7	46.9
≥ 61 years	23.8	20.5	28.8	22.0	24.0	14.8	14.7	12.1	14.8	19.1
Time in Current Position										
≤ 2 years	33.0	36.4	44.1	40.2	36.7	29.1	37.5	36.1	52.2	36.7
3-5 years	22.6	19.0	26.0	22.7	24.3	19.3	23.2	21.0	17.8	22.2
6-10 years	22.2	27.2	18.0	19.8	21.8	27.6	23.8	21.7	15.7	22.4
≥ 11 years	22.2	17.4	11.9	17.4	17.2	24.1	15.5	21.1	14.3	18.6
Type of Hire										
External	47.7	47.7	50.4	37.6	44.9	61.6	63.3	50.7	63.7	51.0
Internal	52.3	52.3	49.6	62.4	55.1	38.4	36.7	49.3	36.3	49.0
	(#)	(#)	(#)	(#)	(#)	(#)	(#)	(#)	(#)	(#)
Average Age (years)	54.4	57.1	56.2	54.1	55.2	52.7	51.3	50.6	48.9	53.3
Average Years in Position	6.9	7.2	5.2	6.6	6.2	7.5	5.9	6.7	4.8	6.5

Note. Adapted from *On the Pathway to the Presidency: Characteristics of Higher Education's Senior Leadership*, by J. E. King and G. G. Gomez, 2008 (Report No. 311685), Washington, DC: American Council on Education. Copyright 2008 by the American Council of Education. Used with permission.

of African American and Hispanic women in 2011 (Gagliard et al., 2017). It is important to note that the 2017 American College President Study does not include the number of multi/biracial women college presidents. While the representation of individuals of color in college and university presidencies has increased overall, the number of women of color college/university presidents is insufficient and does not accurately reflect changing student demographics (Gagliard et al., 2017).

Multiracial individuals are growing three times as fast as the overall American population (Pew Research Center, 2015). An increase in the number of multiracial and biracial individuals could predict an increase in the number of multiracial and biracial students matriculating into institutions of higher education. Supporting multiracial and biracial students through intentional programs, services, and relationships that address their unique needs will be critical as multiracial and biracial students navigate their collegiate experience (Teague, 2015). One form of support is a welcoming campus environment where students feel a sense of belonging and mattering (Strayhorn, 2013), which is often achieved through meaningful interactions between students and staff (Thomas, 2012). Increasing staff diversity, which reflects the diversity of its student body, provides additional opportunities for multiracial and biracial students to connect with college administrators who share similar characteristics and possibly similar experiences. Multiracial and biracial administrators provide distinct perspectives that can help institutions identify and develop resources that support and enable multiracial and biracial students' sense of belonging and community.

Increasing gender and racial diversity strengthens an organization's ability to recruit and retain top talent, reach key decision makers, reflect changing demographics, and address mounting challenges (Hunt, Layton, & Price, 2015). Research shows that there is a positive

relationship between organizational performance and greater gender and racial diversity in leadership (Hunt, Layton, & Price, 2015). Increasing the number of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions will increase institutional diversity, which, in turn, will strengthen the organization by increasing representation, adding diverse perspectives, retaining top talent, and increasing organizational performance (Hunt, Layton, & Price, 2015). Administrators in higher education must understand the experiences of multiracial and biracial women to implement better recruitment and retention practices and support mechanisms. Additionally, exploring the experiences of multiracial and biracial women senior and mid-level administrators will “guide systemic implications” such as institutional policies and practices that affect students and faculty (Harris, 2016, p. 805). However, it is important to note that multi/biracial women should not shoulder the burden of dismantling systemic oppression on their college campuses. It is the responsibility of all campus stakeholders to create welcoming and inclusive environments, policies, and practices. Additionally, increasing the number of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level leadership positions will be important as the number of multiracial and biracial women matriculating through college increases (Hussar & Bailey, 2011). It is important for multi/biracial female students to see multiracial and biracial women in senior leadership positions. Lastly, half of the current college and university presidents are nearing retirement age (King & Gomez, 2008). As current college and university presidents retire, multiracial and biracial women will have the opportunity to assume senior leadership roles within higher education, allowing them to make significant contributions to their individual campus communities and higher education.

Purpose Statement and Research Question

To support multi/biracial women as they advance into senior leadership positions, higher education administrators must have a better understanding of their unique experiences. Research is one important tool that can help administrators as they strive to support multi/biracial women and create inclusive campus environments. However, there is a lack of literature on the specific experiences of multi/biracial women administrators in higher education. Most research on women in higher education explores the experiences and perspectives of White women. As a result, the research fails to represent and address the specific concerns and experiences of women of color (Remedios & Snyder, 2015). Historically, researchers used the experiences of White women as the prototypical example to define women's experiences in higher education (Grillo, 1995; Remedios & Snyder, 2015). However, recent scholarship explores the unique positionality of women of color in higher education (e.g., Britton, 2013; Gardner et al., 2014; Jackson, 2004; Luna et al., 2010; Lutz et al., 2013; Mendenhall et al., 2016; Montas-Hunter, 2012; Nixon, 2016). The research expands the understanding of women in higher education and promotes a social justice agenda. However, within the literature of women of color in higher education, the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions is missing. What little literature exists on the experiences of multiracial and biracial individuals in higher education primarily explores the experiences of students and campus professionals (Gardner, Barrett, & Pearson, 2014). The lack of literature on the specific experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions in higher education illuminates the systemic oppression in higher education, which essentializes multiracial and biracial women into a monoracial narrative (Harris, 2017a; Ricks, 2011). According to Sanchez-Hucles and Davis (2010),

[d]ecisions about which aspects of identity to include in research are not value free. To ignore aspects of identity as unimportant is to tacitly privilege the leadership behavior of the dominant group in the organization under study... [and] to ignore the unequal manner in which hierarchies and systems of power provide opportunities for leadership (p. 178).

The exclusion of research on multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions sends an indirect message that multiracial and biracial women's experiences are not important and not worthy of research (Johnston & Nadal, 2010). By omitting multiracial and biracial women from research, scholars perpetuate "a form of racial exclusion" that promotes systems of oppression and hinders educators' ability to understand and support multiracial and biracial women (Museus, Lambe Sariñana, & Kawamata Ryan, 2015, p. 343). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions within higher education. In addition, this study serves to illuminate the unique experiences of multiracial and biracial women so that higher education administrators can create strategies that transform existing policy and practices, and if necessary, create new structures and systems. This study will help administrators dismantle systemic oppression within the academy by disrupting a monoracial discourse and by creating recommendations for inclusive policy and practice that shape campus culture. The following research question will guide this study: What are the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions in higher education?

Significance

Research on the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions in higher education is significant because findings from this study will inform educators and administrators about the unique experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level leadership roles and highlight systems of oppression. While the

experiences of multiracial and biracial women cannot be essentialized into a singular narrative, biracial and multiracial women share a common need to negotiate racialized experiences related to their gender and race in the workplace (Chang, 2016). I chose to study multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions to create recommendations that will help institutions of higher education recruit, retain, and professionally develop multiracial and biracial women. In turn, multiracial and biracial women senior and mid-level administrators will strengthen the organization (Hunt, Layton, & Price, 2015) and provide support to the increasing number of women multiracial/biracial students matriculating into institutions of higher education (Hussar & Bailey, 2011; Pew Research center, 2015; Thomas, 2012). Also, this study will help administrators dismantle systems of oppression within higher education (Ricks, 2011; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010) by highlighting racist and sexist systems that impact multiracial and biracial women, while providing recommendations for future research and practice to foster more inclusive and welcoming campus communities. This study will “disrupt the monoracial discourse” by adding new voices and experiences to an otherwise monoracial understanding of women of color in higher education administration (Chang, 2016, p. 725). Higher education administrators and faculty should not rely on findings from studies that explore the experiences of White women or monoracial women of color when seeking to understand the experiences of multiracial and biracial women. Administrators must critically examine the unique experiences of multiracial and biracial women to better understand multiraciality and its implications for higher education (Harris, 2016) so they can apply appropriate models of support and professional development for multiracial and biracial women senior and mid-level administrators in higher education (Remedios & Snyder, 2015; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010).

Overview of Study

To understand the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions within higher education, I approached this phenomenological study (van Manen, 2016) through a transformative paradigm (Creswell, 2017; Guido, Chavez, & Lincoln, 2010; Mertens, 2010; Romm, 2014) supported by Critical Race Feminism (Wing, 2003) by employing interviews. Participants for this study included individuals who self-identified as multiracial or biracial women who have served in a senior or mid-level administrative position within a U.S. institution of higher education. Eight to ten participants were recruited via email through professional association listservs and by soliciting referrals from colleagues. I chose to explore multiracial/biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions through a transformative paradigm (Creswell, 2017; Guido, Chavez, & Lincoln, 2010; Mertens, 2010; Romm, 2014) using phenomenology (van Manen, 2016) to provide opportunities for the participants to describe their experiences in their own words, to discover the commonalities between their experiences, and to create recommendations to dismantle systems of oppression. The study occurred from September to December 2017.

Researcher's Perspective

The experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level leadership positions in higher education are extremely personal for me because I am a multiracial woman in higher education administration. My experiences in higher education are unique because of the intersections of my race and gender. As a professional woman, I have served in several roles and capacities in two research one institutions and currently serve as a mid-level administrator at a research one institution. The positions provided the opportunity for community engagement, collaboration, and professional development. However, several opportunities and experiences

were a result of how others perceived my racial identity. Because of my physical characteristics, other administrators assume I am a monoracial woman of color who identifies as a member of a particular racial or ethnic group, such as Latina or Dominican. They use their assumptions to their advantage when promoting the institution's commitment to diversity. I am often included in communication efforts and asked to present at meetings or functions as a representative for monoracial women of color. As a light-skinned woman of color, White administrators are more comfortable interacting with me than other monoracial women of color. Although I am invited into spaces typically reserved for senior administrators, my opinions, suggestions, and feedback are ignored. It is sometimes difficult to realize that my promotions are, in some part, because of other's perceptions of my race and gender. Though I am often tokenized, I ultimately benefit financially and professionally from monoracist assumptions about my identities as a woman of color. I have access to key decision makers and information reserved only for senior administrators. What transpires is a form of interest convergence in which my interests as a higher education professional converge with the interests of the university (Harris, 2016).

Research shows that mentoring is important for women of color in professional settings (Burke & Carter, 2015; Gardner et al., 2014; Hannum, Muhly, Shockley-Zalabak, & White, 2015; Remedios & Snyder, 2015). While not necessary, I believe having similar interests, identities, and professional goals strengthens the mentor/mentee relationship. As I began to think more about the mentor/mentee relationship, I noticed how few multiracial and biracial women serve in senior leadership positions within higher education. I was curious if other multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level leadership positions within higher education share similar experiences.

Scholars may choose to research phenomena that are salient to their identities (Bell & Nkomo, 1999; Gardner et al., 2014). While studying salient identities lends a rich perspective to the research, it also adds a layer of complexity. I felt an immense burden “with the responsibility of not misrepresenting [my participants’] realities... [my] work could be harmful to the women [I] studied if it resulted in distorted conclusions” (Bell & Nkomo, 1999, p. 82). The “challenge [was] producing scholarly work on race and gender when [my] own status in the academy mirrors that of the very women [I] chose to study” (Bell & Nkomo, 1999, p. 81). Researchers must be aware of the power and privilege in their social identities and how others may perceive their identities (Jones, Torres & Aminio, 2014). Self-reflection and awareness is critical in qualitative research to help researchers “guard against hearing, seeing, reading, and presenting results that conform to the researcher’s experiences and assumptions” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2019, p. 249) rather than presenting the participants’ experiences in their own words. My identities as a multiracial woman in higher education administration influenced how I approached, structured, interpreted, and shared my research. Reflexivity, fact checking, journaling, and speaking with a colleague were critical to ensure I captured the true essence of the phenomenon from the participants’ point of view (Mertens, 2010).

Chapter Summary

Scholars have started to explore the experiences of primarily monoracial women of color in higher education administration including African American/Black, Asian, Asian American, Latina/Hispanic, Native American, and Pacific Islander women (e.g., Hannum et al., 2015; Montas-Hunter, 2012; Gardner et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2016; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). Although the literature is limited, dedicated scholars forged new research by uncovering the unique experiences and perspectives of monoracial women of color in higher education (Britton,

2013; Gardner et al., 2014; Jackson, 2004; Luna et al., 2010; Lutz et al., 2013; Mendenhall et al., 2016; Montas-Hunter, 2012; Nixon, 2016). Additionally, scholars are exploring the experiences of multi/biracial students, campus professionals, and the notion of monoracism in higher education (Harris, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c; Museus et al., 2015). However, research on the specific experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions is lacking. The lack of literature is evidence of monoracism and sexism in higher education (Harris, 2017).

As a multiracial woman in higher education, I am deeply connected to this study. Through my personal experiences, I realized that multiracial and biracial women in higher education encounter unique challenges that cannot be defined by a monoracial narrative. Therefore, my phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of other multiracial and biracial women senior and mid-level administrators in higher education and I created recommendations that will dismantle systems of oppression. The next section explores literature that informed this study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To provide context for this study, I examined four areas: women senior administrators in higher education, women of color in higher education, multiracial/biracial college students and campus professionals, and multiracial and biracial women in clinical settings. Due to limited research, I combined the literature about multiracial/biracial college students/campus professionals and multiracial and biracial women in clinical settings into one section. Similar themes are apparent in both bodies of literature.

Women Senior Administrators in Higher Education

The role of women administrators in higher education has evolved since the 1800s (Parker, 2015). As the number of women students in higher education and the number of women's colleges increased, college presidents began to hire women to serve as faculty members and administrators (Duffy, 2010; Parker, 2015; Schwartz, 1997). The dean of women was the first senior administrative position within coeducational institutions (Parker, 2015). Although their primary responsibility was teaching, deans of women were responsible for the moral development, guidance, daily oversight, and protection of women college students (Duffy, 2010; Parker, 2015; Schwartz, 1997).

Through the 1890s until World War II, women made significant contributions to higher education (Duffy, 2010; Schwartz, 1997). They established professional practice and associations, produced literature, and furthered research (Schwartz, 1997). The declining number of male enrollment and male faculty during World War II provided an opportunity for women in higher education to fill vacant leadership roles (Parker, 2015). After World War II,

women were overshadowed and lost authority and decision-making power as they were moved into a liaison position for women students (Parker, 2015; Schwartz, 1997). The deans of women role transitioned into the dean of students position which was primarily occupied by men returning from World War II (Parker, 2015; Schwartz, 1997). The waning number of enrolled women on college campuses due to an emphasis on domestic roles in the home and hostile campus environments contributed to the dwindling number of women in senior administrative roles (Parker, 2015; Schwartz, 1997). The 1960s and 1970s saw a positive, if slow, change in the roles of women in higher education with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972. The pieces of governmental legislation provided protection, access, and equality for women in higher education (Allan, 2011; Parker, 2015).

Today, women in higher education have made great gains and earn more degrees than men (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). The total number of women faculty increased from 40% in 1995 to 49% in 2015 and since 2000, more women have enrolled in college (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). However, compared to men, fewer women serve in senior leadership positions such as tenured faculty and provost (Teague, 2015). Women are disproportionately underrepresented in all senior administrative positions within higher education (Teague, 2015). The most common pathway to a college or university presidency is a senior academic affairs position such as chief academic officer/provost (American Council on Education, 2007; King & Gomez, 2008). Most individuals who serve as chief academic affairs officers have a background in academic administration (i.e., dean) or teaching (i.e., faculty; American Council on Education, 2007). Women are more likely to serve in staff roles than in central academic or student affairs roles that provide a pathway to senior administrative positions (Hill, Miller, Benson, & Handley, 2016; King & Gomez, 2008).

Individuals with degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), which are male dominated fields, occupy the majority of senior leadership positions in higher education (Garrett, 2015). The hiring bias towards individuals with STEM degrees creates barriers for women to senior administrative positions within higher education (Garrett, 2015). As a result, women must first overcome adversity in one of the academic disciplines and then the glass ceiling effect as they aspire to senior leadership within the academy (Garret, 2015).

Due to heavier teaching, service, and advising course loads, women earn tenure slower, conduct less research, and produce fewer publications than their male peers (Aguirre, 2000; Hannum et al., 2015). Women faculty members are often asked to assume additional responsibilities and institutional roles, such as serving on diversity committees, which are not rewarded with promotion and tenure (Aguirre, 2000). For instance, women faculty of color reported mentoring students of color in addition to other service responsibilities that pulled them away from their research (Luna et al., 2010). The increased workload contributes to higher burnout rates for women faculty, particularly for women of color (Luna et al., 2010). Junior faculty members are especially vulnerable to over commitment as institutions often exploit junior faculty by assigning too much responsibility too early (Baez, 2000). Women faculty members also reported lower job satisfaction and lower salaries (Aguirre, 2000; Parker, 2015).

Barriers to Advancement

Although the number of women within higher education has increased, women senior administrators experience significant adversity and challenges in their professional roles due to systems of oppression within the academy (Diehl, 2014; Hill et al., 2016; Teague, 2015). For example, women described instances when unsupportive senior administrators did not offer or ask them to apply for leadership opportunities (Hannum et al., 2014). Additionally, studies

demonstrated that women and people of color receive less favorable performance evaluations than White men due to pro-White leadership bias that favor leadership characteristics (e.g., ambition) traditionally associated with White men (Chin, 2011; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1996; Gundemir, Homan, de Dreu, C., & van Vugt 2014). Other barriers, which are both subtle and transparent, include the glass ceiling effect, glass cliff, as well as gender and leadership stereotypes (Diehl, 2014; Dovidio & Gaertner, 1999; Hill et al., 2016).

Glass ceiling effect. Coined in 1986, the glass ceiling effect includes various barriers that impede women and people of color from upper levels of leadership (Cook & Glass, 2014; Diehl, 2014; Dunn, Gerlach, & Hyle, 2014) and creates a gap, such as pay disparity, between White men, people of color, and women (Catalyst, 1999; Hill et al., 2016; Jordan, Clark, & Waldron, 2007). The glass ceiling effect exists in multiple organizations such as private corporations, higher education, non-profit organizations, and the government (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1999), and is the “difference in advancement for women and people of color that cannot be explained” by other job related characteristics such as the individual’s level of education or amount of experience (Jackson & Leon, 2002, p. 353). The glass ceiling is hidden and overt barriers, such as ineffective mentoring, that prevent women and people of color from ascending into senior leadership positions. For instance, women had difficulty making important connections because their supervisors excluded them from activities, such as social functions outside of the workplace, where networking and mentoring occurred (Hill et al., 2016; Hannum et al., 2014).

Women of color experience the glass ceiling effect more acutely than White women or Black men due to the intersectionality of their identities (Hill et al., 2016). Various factors such as race and ethnicity “can add up to dramatically different experiences among different groups of

women” (Hill et al., 2016, p. 5). The glass ceiling effect is greater at higher levels of leadership and can differ in the advancement opportunities over the course of a career (Jackson & Leon, 2002). The more senior the leadership role, the less likely for a woman to hold the position (Hill et al., 2016). The number of women of color in senior leadership positions is lower than any other group including Black men (Hill et al., 2016).

The glass cliff. Researchers use the glass cliff as a metaphor to describe the phenomenon of women appointed to high-risk senior leadership positions within failing organizations (Cook & Glass, 2013). Stereotypes about female leadership characteristics perpetuate the belief that women are better suited for situations that require greater emotional sensitivity, communication, and interpersonal skills which are often necessary when an organization experiences declining performance (Cook & Glass, 2013; Ryan & Haslam, 2007; Ryan, Haslam, Hersby, & Bongiorno, 2011). For instance, women disproportionately represented senior leaders in failing firms that consistently experienced declining performance for a significant period of time (Ryan & Haslam, 2007). The glass cliff phenomenon implies that women are set-up to fail in high-risk situations, and if they do, perpetuates the hostile, sexist stereotypes about women’s lack of leadership skills (Cook & Glass, 2013).

Gender and leadership stereotypes. Many organizations use prototypical leadership qualities associated with White males when identifying and promoting individuals to senior administrative positions (Livingston, 2013). The concept of leadership is based on stereotypical masculine traits such as aggression and decisiveness (Hill et al., 2016). Although assertiveness is not a trait unique to men (Hill et al., 2016), women are often not considered a “good fit” for leadership positions due to gender stereotypes (Livingston, 2013, p. 4). For instance, gender stereotypes in U.S. culture perpetuate the belief that mothers are not as invested in their careers,

therefore, their commitment to their work is often questioned (Hill et al., 2016). Some women break through the glass ceiling and assume senior leadership positions within higher education (Hill et al., 2016). However, the majority of the women who are able to overcome the glass ceiling are White.

While literature explicates the collective challenges of women administrators in higher education, women of color are impacted and disadvantaged differently than White women due to the intersectionality of their race and gender (Hill et al., 2016). A common misconception is that all women take the same route to leadership positions and face the same challenges once they achieve leadership roles (Bell & Nkomo, 2003). However, research shows that White women and women of color “travel separate paths and make different choices about how to persevere in their professional careers” (Bell & Nkomo, 2003, p. 11).

Women of Color in Higher Education

Most scholarship about women of color focuses on undergraduate and graduate women and faculty (Gardner et al., 2014). I located a limited number of published studies on women senior administrators of color such as college presidents, deans of students, and chief diversity officers (e.g., Gardner et al., 2014; Gomez et al., 2015; Jackson, 2004; Nixon, 2016). I did not locate research on the specific experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior or mid-level administrative positions within the higher education. Therefore, the majority of the literature included in the review explores the experiences of monoracial women of color in senior administrative positions in higher education.

Social identities affect how women of color in higher education experience interpersonal interactions and institutional policies and processes due to the saliency of their race and gender (Britton, 2013; Hill et al., 2016; Diehl, 2014; Nixon, 2016). Early research on racial

discrimination in the workplace may shed more light on men of color's experiences because, historically, scholars organized discrimination "around prototypical representations of marginalized groups" (Remedios & Snyder, 2015, p. 373). Because men are the prototypical members of their group, scholars used the experiences of men of color to describe the impact of prejudice on all people of color (Remedios & Snyder, 2015). However, men and women of color experience discrimination differently due to the intersection of race and gender (Remedios & Snyder, 2015). Similarly, research on the collective impact of gender discrimination neglects the unique experiences of women of color (Grillo, 1995). Remedios and Snyder (2015) posit:

focusing on comparisons between White women and women of color restricts the issues studied to these that women of all races face. This approach treats White women as the normative group, further reinforcing the assumption that the only perspectives of women of color that are important to understand are those that differ from the perspective of White women. (p. 373)

Because of the intersectionality of their race and gender, women of color must interpret acts of discrimination to determine if the act of prejudice is due to their race, gender, or the intersection of their race and gender depending on the saliency of the specific identity at the time of the incident (Remedios & Snyder, 2015).

African-American women college and university presidents and African-American women chief business executives regard their race and gender as important to their positions and are sensitive about how they present themselves to others (Parker, 2002; Waring, 2003). Because they serve in highly visible roles, African-American women college and university presidents and African-American women chief business executives reported a greater awareness of their race and gender (Parker, 2002; Waring, 2003). For instance, the presidents and chief business executives felt the need to scrutinize the way they communicated with others, and if necessary, altered their communication strategies so they would not be perceived as assertive or aggressive (Parker, 2002; Waring, 2003). As members of a marginalized group in highly visible

positions, they were aware that they garnered more attention and that little things, such as the type of house they lived in or how they dressed professionally, were heightened because of their race, gender, and position (Waring, 2003). The presidents felt the need to reduce the amount of attention by aligning their personal lifestyle choices (e.g., how they dressed) with the institution's culture (Waring, 2003). The sensitivity and awareness were especially salient for women who worked in predominately White institutions.

Women of color who serve in certain senior administrative positions experience “double or triple marginalization” due to the intersection of their race, gender, and role within the institution (Nixon, 2016, p. 12). For instance, women of color in leadership positions that focus on diversity and inclusivity issues (e.g., chief diversity officers) felt a heightened awareness of their race and gender similar to the African-American college presidents. However, the diversity work further isolated the chief diversity officers (CDO) because others viewed diversity and inclusivity as the work of individuals with marginalized identities (Nixon, 2016). The CDOs felt additional expectations such as championing other underrepresented groups and the need to bring attention to other people of color especially in predominately White institutions (Nixon, 2016). Stereotypes about women of color influenced how the chief diversity officers approached their work (Nixon, 2016). The CDOs felt the need to employ mechanisms to help them negotiate race and gender in the workplace, such as muting themselves, or not speaking up, so other faculty and administrators perceived them as non-threatening (Nixon, 2016). The women felt compelled to perform in their roles by monitoring their tone of voice, words, appearance, and body language (Nixon, 2016).

Barriers to Advancement

While White women and women of color experience adversity in the workplace, women of color must overcome subtle forms of racist and sexist slights based on stereotypes and other socially constructed images (Mendenhall, Harwood, & Browne Hunt, 2016). For example, African-American and Latina women are more likely to face assumptions about their behavior than their White counterparts (Britton, 2013; Hill et al., 2016). When African-American and Latina women behaved assertively in their leadership positions, other faculty and administrators described them as aggressive, angry, and emotional (Hill et al., 2016).

Tokenism, marginalization, devaluation, and double bind are unique challenges for women of color in higher education ("Barriers encountered," 2009; Berdahl & Moore, 2006). The barriers exist at the individual and institutional levels ("Barriers encountered," 2009). One barrier at the individual level which affects women of color are conflicting expectations due to membership in two marginalized identities ("Barriers encountered," 2009; Bell & Nkomo, 1999). Women of color experience the phenomenon as a double bind or double jeopardy in which they must fulfill stereotypical feminine gender roles and masculine leadership qualities simultaneously (Berdahl & Moore, 2006). Yet, they cannot exhibit too many masculine or feminine characteristics and must shoulder the responsibility of representing their entire racial group (Luna, Medina, & Gorman, 2010). For example, women of color must fulfill stereotypical race and gender-based expectations by exhibiting maternal characteristics (e.g., nurturing, warm, kind; Livingston, 2013; Montas-Hunter, 2010). However, they are also expected to display agentic behavior, such as self-promotion, typically associated with men (Livingston, 2013). As a result, women of color must continually balance their behavior (Montas-Hunter, 2012).

Institutional barriers include marginalization, devaluation, and tokenism caused by organizational policies and practices ("Barriers encountered" 2009; Lewis et al., 2016; Luna et al., 2010). Racist and sexist systems of oppression result in underrepresentation of women of color within the academe and causes exclusion and marginalization (Luna et al., 2010). Through marginalization, institutions of higher education exclude women of color from the networks, resources, and opportunities provided to their peers. Women of color become invisible and their work, opinions, and efforts are not valued (Mendenhall et al., 2016). However, women of color serve as tokens in roles that highlight their outsider status (Bell & Nkomo, 1999). They often find themselves as the only women of color in highly visible administrative roles that benefit the organization (Bell & Nkomo, 2003). Women of color "constantly [wrestle] with the contradictory position of being simultaneously visible and invisible" (Bell & Nkomo, 1999, p. 82). They are visible when an institution must demonstrate its commitment to diversity, but at other times, their work, contributions, and experiences are largely ignored (Bell & Nkomo, 1999). While women of color occupy the same space as White individuals and men of color, they do not receive the same level of respect or authority (Luna et al., 2010; Marbley, Wong, Santos-Hatchett, Pratt, & Jaddo, 2011; Seo & Hinton, 2009). Luna et al. (2010, p. 8) posit:

Marginalization and tokenism brings with it expectancies to window dress, to posture, to placate the dominant culture, and to be the caricature that represents a whole population of people. When ethnic minority women of color do not fit the stereotype, they become suspect—distrusted and even shunned.

Women of color must overcome the notion that they are hired or promoted due to affirmative action and must manage double standards for their work and professional conduct (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wong, 2011). For instance, African-American women had to overcome aversive racism when White men assumed that the WOC were promoted solely because of their identities (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1996). The White men discredited the WOC's talents, skills, and

experience and attributed the women's promotion to affirmative action (Turner et al., 2011). Students, faculty, and administrators often criticize WOC's research and credentials (Marbley et al., 2011). Other faculty often challenge the legitimacy of women of color's work when they choose to study racial and/or feminist issues (Marbley et al., 2011).

Enablers of Success

Often influenced by the perceptions and expectations of others, women of color in higher education must employ unique mechanisms to overcome challenges and systematic racist and sexist policies and procedures in higher education (Bell & Nkomo, 1998, 1999; Holder, Jackson & Ponterotto, 2015; Nixon, 2016; Seo & Hinton, 2009; Waring, 2003). To overcome barriers, women of color develop support systems, draw strength from mentors and professional networks, develop strong sense of self and values, and take advantage of professional preparation and previous professional experience (Bell & Nkomo, 1999; Gardner et al., 2014; Montas-Hunter, 2012; Nixon, 2016). For instance, women faculty of color created a research and writing collective to support and encourage each other in their scholarship and publications (Martinez et al., 2015).

Multiracial/Biracial Women in Higher Education

Historically, research on gender and leadership examined White women and prior research on race and leadership examined Black men (Livingston, 2013). Although scholarship on women of color is slowly increasing (Hill et al., 2016; Miles, 2012; Turner et al., 2011), researchers have failed to examine the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior administrative positions within higher education (King & Gomez, 2008; Waring, 2003). The existing research on women of color in higher education is limited and explores conceptions of leadership (Hannum et al., 2015), self-efficacy (Montas-Hunter, 2012), barriers and enablers to

success (Gardner et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2016), the intersection of race and gender (Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010), and leadership development (Davis & Maldonado, 2015) of primarily monoracial women including African American/Black, Asian, Asian American, Latina/Hispanic, Native American, and Pacific Islander women.

During the 2000 Census, multiracial and biracial individuals could self-identify as more than one race for the first time (Jones & Bullock, 2012). The number of individuals reporting more than one racial identity increased from 6.8 million in 2000 to 9 million people in 2010 (Jones & Bullock, 2012). However, the Pew Research Center estimates that the Census Bureau's number may in fact understate the actual size of the multiracial/biracial population in the United States (Pew Research Center, 2015). In 2015, people who identified as two or more races made up 2 percent of the labor force (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). In fall 2015, 1 percent or less of full-time faculty were individuals who identified as two or more races and American Indian/Alaska Native (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017).

In the last ten years, less than 1 percent of articles published in U.S. peer-reviewed higher education journals explored multiracial and/or biracial individuals (Museus, Lambe Sariñana, & Kawamata Ryan, 2015). Current scholarship in the field of higher education on multiracial and biracial individuals primarily explores the identity development, coping mechanisms, experiences with microaggressions, and support strategies of multiracial and biracial college students (Harris, 2017a, 2017b; Museus et al., 2015; Renn, 2003) and the experiences of multiracial and biracial campus professionals (Harris, 2017c). Research on multiracial and biracial women examines their identity development and experiences in a therapeutic setting so that counselors can better support the women through therapy (Hall, 2004; Nishimura, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004). Therefore, I used literature that examines the experiences of

multiracial and biracial college students/campus professionals and literature that explores the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in clinical settings to inform this study. I will use literature on racialized experiences and not identity development because the purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior administrative positions within higher education.

Multi/Biracial College Students, Campus Professionals, and Women in Therapy

Most scholarship on multiracial and biracial college students and multiracial/biracial women in clinical settings both inside and outside of higher education examines their racial identity development (Hyman, 2010; Museus et al., 2015). Only recently have scholars begun to explore other aspects of multiracial and biracial individuals' multiraciality such as multiracial and biracial students' response to prejudice and discrimination (Museus et al., 2015).

Multiracial/biracial college students, campus professionals, and women in therapy experience unique challenges associated with their racial identity such as assumptions of their racial identity by others, questioned ancestry, and objectification (Harris, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c; Hyman, 2010; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Kellogg & Liddell 2012; Museus et al., 2011) caused by monoracist policies, practices, and ideologies (Hall, 2017c; Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Nishimura, 2004).

Used as a tool by communities of color and White communities to maintain a monoracial paradigm of race, monoracism excludes and oppresses multiracial and biracial individuals on systematic and interpersonal levels (Harris, 2016; 2017; Johnston & Nadal, 2010). The following sections summarize themes found in the literature.

Assumed racial identity and questioned ancestry. Because of their racial background and ambiguous physical characteristics, some biracial and multiracial people experienced incidents in which other individuals assumed or labeled their racial identity (Harris, 2017a,

2017b, 2017c; Hall, 2004; Kellogg & Liddell, 2012). Monoracial individuals may assume a multiracial or biracial student/campus professional identifies with a particular monoracial or other racial group based on their phenotype, mannerisms, dress, or dialect (Harris, 2017b, 2017c). If others are not able to identify a multiracial or biracial individual's racial background, they often label the individual with a particular monoracial category based on their physical characteristics (Kellogg & Liddell, 2012). The multiracial/biracial individual's racial identity is essentialized into a monoracial understanding of racial categories (Museus et al., 2016).

Monoracial individuals may assume or question a multiracial or biracial individual's mixed heritage (Harris, 2017a, 2017c). Multiracial and biracial college students and women in clinical settings felt pressured to defend that they were truly a member of a certain racial group when their racial legitimacy was challenged (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Kellogg & Liddell, 2012; Nadal et al., 2011).

Pressure to monoracially identify. Historically, institutional policy and practices deny multiracial and biracial students the opportunity to express their multiraciality (Harris, 2016; 2017; Kellogg & Liddell, 2012; Nadal et al., 2011; Renn, 2003). For instance, multiracial and biracial students and campus professionals are pressured to monoracially identify when they are required to check only one racial category when completing forms (Kellogg & Liddell, 2012). Requiring a multiracial/biracial student and/or campus professional to select one racial category perpetuates a monoracist paradigm and White supremacy to uphold the status quo (Harris, 2016, 2017c; Johnston & Nadal, 2010). The underlying beliefs in singular, discrete racial categories created by White supremacists and supported by communities of color create social and psychological systems of oppression, such as the one-drop rule, which maintain racial hierarchies (Grillo, 1995; Harris, 2016; Johnston & Nadal, 2010). Multiracial and biracial individuals

receive the message that monoraciality is the norm and that they should choose one of their racial identities (Nadal et al., 2011). Even when they are able to express their racial background, some peers invalidate, ignore, deny, or refuse to acknowledge multiracial or biracial individuals' mixed heritage (Harris, 2017a, 2017c; Museus et al., 2015; Nadal et al., 2011).

Outsider status. Due to their racial background, multiracial and biracial students may feel uncomfortable in social spaces or groups that subscribe to monoracial ideologies (Harris, 2017a; Renn, 2003). For instance, depending on their characteristics such as physical appearance and cultural knowledge, a biracial student with Black/White ancestry may feel that they do not fit stereotypical definitions of what it means to be Black concerning how they dress, speak, or their personal interests. Multiracial or biracial students who desired to join monoracial social groups, such as the Black Student Association, frequently felt pressured to act out qualities of the particular monoracial group to prove they were legitimate members (Hall, 2004; Kellogg & Liddell, 2012; Museus et al., 2016). After gaining membership into the monoracial group, the multiracial/biracial student's authenticity as a member of the group was questioned and evaluated based on cultural knowledge, language ability, and affiliations (Museus et al., 2016). Due to indoctrinated racial oppression, multiracial and monoracial communities can unconsciously or indirectly internalize stereotypes and negative ideologies "that circulate throughout society where [the ideologies] inform social norms, organizational practices, bureaucratic procedures, and commonsense knowledge" (Pyke, 2010). Therefore, multiracial or biracial students may believe that they do not possess enough monoracial characteristics to belong to or fit within a monoracial peer group (Harris, 2017a; Kellogg & Liddell, 2012). Exclusion from a monoracial peer group or environment is a common form of racism that is unique to multiracial and biracial individuals (Johnston & Nadal, 2010; Museus et al., 2015).

Similarly, multiracial and biracial women in clinical settings did not feel completely accepted by one or more monoracial or monoethnic groups of which they identified because of their physical appearance (Hall, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2004). Multiracial and biracial campus professionals felt that they were not monoracial enough for their colleagues, institutions, or students because of their mixed-racial heritage (Harris, 2017c). It is important to note that internalized racism, whether within a multiracial individual or a monoracial community, is the result of racist ideologies perpetuated by White supremacy and not the cause of racism (Pyke, 2010).

Objectification. Multiracial/biracial students and women in clinical settings described instances of sexual objectification because of their physical appearance and background (Museus et al., 2015; Nadal et al., 2011; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2004). Strangers, peers, and sometimes family members, commented on how exotic the multiracial or biracial individual appeared (Museus et al., 2016; Nadal et al., 2011). Although both multiracial and biracial men and women seem to experience exoticization and objectification, multiracial and biracial women reported more instances than men (Museus et al., 2016; Nadal et al., 2011). The increased number of instances could indicate that multiracial and biracial women experience more exoticization and objectification as sexist standards in society consider physical attributes more salient for women (Hall, 2004; Museus et al., 2016). Additionally, multiracial and biracial students are idealized as a symbol of a post-racial America because of their mixed heritage (Harris, 2016; Johnston & Nadal, 2010). Some individuals believe multiracial and biracial individuals are evidence that the United States has moved past racism and racist ideologies into a colorblind society (Neville, Gallardo, & Sue, 2016).

Colorism. Physical features play a significant role in society and are key racial signifiers (Nishimura, 2004). Western culture bases attractiveness on White phenotypes such as narrow features and straight hair (Nishimura, 2004). Caused by racist ideologies of beauty, colorism is discrimination based on one's physical appearance and causes tension between and within monoracial and biracial/multiracial groups (Harris, 2016; Nishimura, 2004; Rockquemore & Brunson, 2004). Some monoracial women view multiracial and biracial women with lighter complexions and finer hair as privileged (Hall, 2004). Multiracial and biracial women can discriminate towards other multiracial/biracial women based on their physical features (Nishimura, 2004). For example, some multiracial/biracial women may experience microaggressions because their physical features, such as a broad nose, dark skin, or narrow eyes, do not align with what Western culture judges as attractive (Nishimura, 2004). Colorism perpetuates the notion of White physical attributes over ethnic attributes and maintains racial hierarchies based on phenotype (Harris, 2016). Colorism prevents coalition building within communities of color and, in fact, creates tension and mistrust between people of color (Harris, 2016). However, it is important to note that colorism is not exclusive to multiracial/biracial women. Monoracial women of color may also experience colorism. Additionally, not all multiracial/biracial women experience colorism (Harris, 2016). Multiracial and biracial college students, campus professionals, and women in therapy experience unique challenges due to their multiplicative identities that has a deep impact on their emotional and physical well-being.

Impact of Discrimination on the Individual

Women of color experience significant consequences due to negotiating various barriers and challenges in the workplace. Bicultural existence in which women of color move back and forth between their own culture and the dominant culture produces stress that can occur on the

superficial or deeply emotional level (Lutz, Hassouneh, Akeroyd, & Beckett, 2013). Because they are under constant scrutiny, women of color felt additional performance pressure and felt they did not have the luxury of making errors in the workplace (Lloyd-Jones, 2009). Other effects of prejudice include chronic uncertainty, lower job satisfaction, mental health concerns such as distress, lack of sense of control, lack of ability to assess one's strengths and weaknesses, and the inability to set goals (Berdhal & Moore, 2006; Remedios & Snyder, 2015). Women of color reported feelings of frustration, self-doubt, pressure, and tension serving as senior leaders in institutions of higher education due to hostile work environments (Nixon, 2016).

Similar to monoracial women of color, multiracial/biracial college students and multiracial/biracial women in clinical settings experienced significant negative impacts due to discrimination. Isolation, frustration, and feelings of disappointment, discomfort, anger, exclusion, and invalidation are a few negative reactions reported by multiracial and biracial individuals as a result of encounters with both institutional and interpersonal microaggressions (Nadal et al., 2011; Museus et al., 2015). Biracial/multiracial college students and women expressed the need and importance of feeling accepted and welcomed by others (Hyman, 2010). Biracial and multiracial individuals utilized support networks, embraced the fluid nature of their racial identities, avoided confrontation, and educated others on multiraciality to cope with discrimination and microaggressions (Museus et al., 2015; Renn, 2003).

Chapter Summary

Despite scholarship on women in higher education (Hannum et al., 2014; Teague, 2015), women of color in higher education (Britton, 2013; Cook & Glass, 2014; Diehl, 2014; Dunn et al., 2014; Garrett, 2015; Hill et al., 2016; Mendenhall et al., 2016; Miles, 2012; Montes-Hunter, 2012), multiracial and biracial college students (Harris, 2017a, 2017b, Kellogg & Liddell; Muses

et al., 2016), multiracial and biracial campus professionals (Harris, 2017c), and multiracial and biracial women in clinical settings (Hyman, 2010), the unique experiences of multiracial and biracial women senior and mid-level administrators within higher education is lost in the literature. The lack of research on multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions illuminates the need to increase research and highlights prejudice within academic scholarship. Therefore, this study will examine the workplace experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions in higher education.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Although scholars have researched the experiences of women of color in higher education (Britton, 2013; Cook & Glass, 2014; Diehl, 2014; Dunn et al., 2014; Garrett, 2015; Hill et al., 2016; Mendenhall et al., 2016; Miles, 2012; Montes-Hunter, 2012), they have neglected the unique experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions. Historically, scholarship on women in higher education uses the experiences of White women (Grillo, 1995) and monoracial women of color as prototypical examples and fails to adequately represent the specific experiences of multiracial and biracial women. The exclusion of research on multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions in higher education sends an indirect message that multiracial and biracial women's experiences are not important and therefore not worthy of research (Harris, 2016; Johnston & Nadal, 2010). Therefore, administrators have many implications to uncover and many experiences to understand given the multiraciality of biracial and multiracial women and the complex systems of oppression in higher education (Hyman, 2014). To better understand the experiences of multiracial and biracial women of color in senior and mid-level administrative positions within higher education, I approached this study through a transformative paradigm (Creswell, 2014; Guido, Chávez, & Lincoln, 2010; Mertens, 2010; Romm, 2014) using phenomenology (van Manen, 2016) by conducting semi-structured interviews. The following sections review the paradigm, theoretical framework, methodology, and method.

Paradigm

The purpose of the transformative paradigm is to make sense of the human experience, to create shared knowledge, advance social justice, and to deconstruct oppressive systems of power through empowerment and emancipation of non-dominant groups (Creswell, 2014; Guido, Chávez, & Lincoln, 2010; Mertens, 2010; Romm, 2014). As such, I used the transformative paradigm to guide this study. The participants and I created knowledge together and educated each other through a mutual exchange during the process (Mertens, 1999; 2010). In transformative research, the axiology includes reciprocity, respect for cultural norms, and the promotion of social justice and human rights (Mertens, 1999; 2010). I created recommendations based on the data that will help dismantle systems of oppression within higher education by exposing racism and sexism that oppress multiracial and biracial women senior and mid-level administrators therefore advancing a social justice agenda. In the transformative paradigm, ontology is the belief that various versions of reality exist based on the individual's social positioning (Mertens, 2010; Romm, 2014). Multiracial and biracial women senior and mid-level administrators have a unique position within higher education that differs from monoracial women due to their multiraciality. I situated the participants in the center of the study therefore recognizing their unique positionality (Wing, 2003). The epistemology in transformative research is a shared link between the researcher and the participants (Mertens, 2010; Romm, 2014). I worked closely with the participants to “revel problems, strengths, and possibilities for sustainable change” within higher education (Guido et al., 2014). The transformative paradigm informed the development of this study by guiding my theoretical framework, methodology, and method (Mertens, 2010).

Critical Race Feminism Theory

Critical Race Feminism (CRF) emerged at the end of the twentieth century from existing law and theory, which failed to address the specific concerns of women of color (Wing, 2003). CRF originates from Critical Legal Studies (CLS), feminist jurisprudence, and Critical Race Theory (CRT; Wing, 2003). Existing feminist theory did not consider the experiences of women of color but generalized all women's experiences as the same. White women, people of color, and others were initially attracted to Critical Legal Studies because it challenged conventional law, which disproportionately impacted and oppressed White women and people of color (Wing, 2003). However, some scholars believed CLS excluded the unique perspectives of people of color from the larger discourse on social justice and human rights, and therefore could not produce solutions to the difficulties people of color experienced (Cleaver, 2003). Thus, CRT and its corresponding theories like CRF emerged (Wing, 2003).

The core tenets of CRF are the centrality of women of color in research and praxis (Mizelle & Berry, 2006); the intersectionality of race and gender (Mizelle & Berry, 2006); law as a mechanism to perpetuate unjust class, race, and gender hierarchies (Johnson, 2003); anti-essentialism which critiques the notion of one female voice (Wing, 2003; Crenshaw, 2003); the unique positionality of women of color (Cleaver, 2003; Crenshaw, 2003); race as a social construct and racism as a system of oppression inherent in U.S. society (Cleaver, 2003; Johnson, 2003; Wing, 2003); multidisciplinary scholarship using counter-storytelling (Johnson, 2003; Wing, 2003); and critical race praxis which deconstructs systems of oppression (Wing, 2003). While all of the tenets of CRF informed this study, the principles that aligned most closely with the study's guiding question and purpose statement were multiplicative identity and anti-essentialism, critical race praxis, counter-storytelling and challenging the status quo.

Multiplicative identity and anti-essentialism. Multiplicative identity and anti-essentialism are important in CRF as the experiences of women of color cannot be reduced to a single narrative (Wing, 2003). Because of their multiraciality, biracial and multiracial women experience particular challenges separate from other women of color. While sexism, gender inequality, and racism exist for all women of color, the impact of discrimination is not interchangeable or singular (Cleaver, 2003; Crenshaw, 2003; Harris, 2016). Using CRF, it became apparent how the experiences of multiracial and biracial women are essentialized into a monoracial narrative as U.S. society has been conditioned to view discrimination on “a single categorical axis” (Crenshaw, 2003, p. 23). A single perspective of discrimination, such as monoracism, erases members of non-prototypical groups “in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group” such as Black women and other monoracial women of color (Crenshaw, 2003, p. 23). When researchers limit scholarship to only monoracial women of color, they render multiracial and biracial women invisible and exclude them from the collective work of dismantling systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 2003).

Critical race praxis. Praxis plays a critical role in CRF. Consistent with the transformative paradigm (Mertens, 2010), CRF adherents believe that it is not enough to generate knowledge for the sake of knowledge. Research should create solutions that dismantle systems of oppression and empower women of color (Wing, 2003). By highlighting the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions, this research created a counter narrative that, by mere existence, begins to dismantle systematic oppression. This study also created recommendations that will inform policy and practice to support multiracial and biracial women senior and mid-level administrators in higher education.

Key stakeholders and senior administrators responsible for institutional outcomes, policy, and practice received a copy of this study.

Counter-storytelling and challenging the status quo. CRF scholars often use narrative or storytelling methodologies to challenge the status quo (Wing, 2003). CRF adherents believe narratives and storytelling have significant value as the methods empower women of color, honor oral tradition, connect women of color through informal language, and endorse a multidisciplinary approach to research (Wing, 2003). This study provided the participants the opportunity to shed light on institutional racist and sexist systems that oppress multiracial and biracial women through interviews that highlight their personal narrative.

Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative research aims to discover, understand, or describe a phenomenon by answering the question why, what, or how (Patton & Cochran, 2002). It provides insight into underlying beliefs, ideas, and experiences in the world. I conducted a phenomenological study to explore the lived experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions in higher education.

Both a 20th century school of thought and a methodology, phenomenology is the study of an occurrence from the perspective of the individual who experienced the phenomenon (Van Manen, 2016). The phenomenon includes the way the individual experiences the event (such as their perception, thought, and emotions) and the meaning they assign to a specific event or occurrence (Smith, 2013). For this study, the phenomenon included the racialized and gendered experiences of multiracial and biracial women in the workplace. This study examined how multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions within higher

education perceive, internalize, and make meaning of interpersonal interactions, and institutional policies and procedures (Smith, 2013).

While the experiences of multiracial and biracial women are unique to each individual, this study examined the phenomenon from multiple participants to uncover commonalities between the experiences, and the study was person-centered rather than focused on a specific process or theory (Van Manen, 2016). Although it is similar to other types of qualitative research, phenomenological research describes rather than explains and is more than characterization (Lester, 1999). It emphasizes the way multiracial and biracial women senior and mid-level administrators experience and interpret their interactions with systems of oppression and “seeks to analyze and articulate not what *ought* to happen as a methodology but what *does* happen” (Regan, 2012, p. 301). Methods associated with phenomenological research include interviews, drawings, writings, discussions, and observations (Lester, 1999). Advantages to phenomenology include a deep understanding of the phenomenon and rich data from the participants’ perspectives (Lester, 1999).

Recruitment

To recruit eight to ten participants for my study, I used a purposive, snowball sampling method (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Snowball sampling is a form of purposive sampling in which individuals who meet the study’s criteria are identified (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once identified, the participants refer other individuals who may meet the criteria. I advertised via email through the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) Center for Women Constituent Group, the NASPA Women in Student Affairs Constituent Group, and the NASPA MultiRacial Knowledge Community Constituent Groups. Listserv administrators received recruitment materials and forwarded recruitment emails to their specific constituent

group. I also asked for referrals from participants and trusted colleagues, and I emailed invitations to individuals who I know met the criteria (Appendices A, B, and C). I recruited individuals who self-identified as multiracial or biracial women who have served in a senior or mid-level administrative position within a U.S. institution of higher education for more than one year. Senior administrators were defined as individuals responsible for multiple university functional areas, portfolios, or units (e.g. chief academic officer, chief diversity officer, chief student affairs officer, etc.) and mid-level administrators were defined as individuals responsible for one or more departments/functional areas (e.g. director, dean, etc.). I recruited women from various types of institutions such as small, liberal arts colleges, medium, private research-one universities, and large, land-grant, research-one universities. Multiracial and biracial individuals were defined as those identifying as having more than one race or exploring an identity that includes more than one race (National Association of Student Personnel Administrators MultiRacial Knowledge Community, 2008). I recruited participants who have served as senior or mid-level administrators for at least one-year as multiracial and biracial women who met the criterion had a greater depth of experience and perspective.

Participants

Participants for this study included nine individuals who self-identified as multiracial or biracial women who have served in a senior or mid-level administrative position within a U.S. institution of higher education for more than one year. As highlighted in Table 3, I interviewed nine multiracial/biracial women for this study from various institutions across the United States. The institutions included three large, public, research-one universities; three mid-sized, private, research-one universities; one midsized, private, Women's college; and two small, private, liberal-arts colleges. All the universities are predominantly White institutions. Three of the

Table 3.

Research Participants

Pseudonym	Self-Identifies	Functional Area	Level	Institution Type	Location	Size
Angie	Asian/White	Residential Education	Mid	Public, Research-one	Midwest	Large
Daphne	Black/Filipino-American	Student Advising	Mid	Private, Women's college	Southeast	Midsized
Elizabeth	Chinese/White	Student Transitions	Senior	Private, Research-one	Midwest	Midsized
Sarah	Japanese/Black	Diversity and Inclusion	Senior	Private, Research-one	Midwest	Midsized
Danielle	African/White	Cultural Center	Mid	Public, Research-one	Southeast	Large
Veronica	Afro-Latinx	Student Conduct	Senior	Private, Liberal-arts	Southwest	Small
Bryant	Japanese/White	Student Counseling	Senior	Private, Research-one	Southeast	Midsized
Rebecca	Asian/Latinx	Diversity and Inclusion	Senior	Private, Women's college	Southeast	Small
Karen	Black/White	Multicultural Affairs	Senior	Public, Research-one	Midwest	Large

participants serve in mid-level administrative positions and six of the women serve in senior level administrative positions. It is important to note that most participants serve in diversity/cultural competency functional areas on their campuses. Once the participants expressed interest in the study, I emailed the interview questions and consent form to each participant. I informed the participants that I would maintain their confidentiality and communicated their rights as participants in this study. During the first interview, I reminded the participants that they could withdraw from the study at any point and that they had the opportunity to select their own pseudonym.

Data Collection

To collect data for this study, I employed one in-depth, semi-structured interview and offered the participants the opportunity to complete an optional second in-depth, semi-structured interview. I facilitated the one in-depth, semi-structured interview in-person, over the phone, or via Skype, based on the participant's location. The interview lasted from sixty to ninety minutes and captured the participant's demographic data, contextual information about the university/institution in which they worked, the position they currently occupy at their institution, and their experiences as a senior or mid-level administrator. Additionally, the participants shared experiences from previous positions or institutions at which they worked.

If I had lingering questions after analyzing data from the initial interview, I contacted the participant and invited her to complete an optional second interview. After the initial analysis, I contacted three participants and invited them to complete a second interview. All three women elected to participate. The second interviews clarified any lingering questions from the first interview and/or collected additional information. I chose interviews because the method is congruent with phenomenology and provided the participants the opportunity to describe their

experiences in their own words through counter-storytelling (Mertens, 2010; Mizelle & Berry, 2006; Wing, 2003, Van Manen, 2016). Interviews also provided the opportunity for mutual exchange between me and the participants (Mertens, 2010). While the questions were semi-structured, the interviews focused on the participant. Therefore, I deviated from the questions when the interview proceeded in a different direction than intended (Appendix D).

Data Analysis

The data collection and analysis processes are iterative and dynamic as both components begin simultaneously (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Once all data are collected, the researcher completes the process by making meaning of the data through intensive analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher will use several techniques such as “consolidating, reducing, and interpreting” the information until findings emerge (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 202). Data analysis occurs in two stages: open and axial coding and theoretical analysis.

Open and axial coding. After reading the interview transcriptions, I started open coding by making note of anything particularly relevant from the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana, 2016). The notes were direct quotes from the participants, my thoughts, or concepts from the literature (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I gave particular attention to any details that were useful to answer the guiding question, areas that needed additional data, and any lingering questions that needed clarification. Next, I used axial coding to construct categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Axial coding is a process in which the researcher identifies and groups codes that seem especially relevant (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As I coded the data, I considered the purpose of my study, the methodology, and the theoretical framework that helped me identify both the “particulars” and the “big picture” of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 207).

As I consistently compared the lists of codes found in each interview transcription (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), I synthesized the data into categories (Saldana, 2016). I then sorted the categories by identifying overarching themes that applied across the interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lastly, I identified a name that described the overarching themes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Theoretical analysis. Data analysis is both inductive and deductive (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The beginning of the process was inductive as I searched for information that created a pattern. However, the process became deductive as I compared categories across the various groups. I identified subsequent categories that supported or contradicted the original data. Ultimately, the overarching themes became more theoretical in nature as the themes both described and interpreted the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I moved beyond the observable data and made inferences, which gave meaning that created findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldana, 2016).

Rigor

To ensure goodness and trustworthiness, I situated my study within the transformative paradigm and used Critical Race Feminism as a lens to understand and interpret the data thereby ensuring consistency (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A researcher situates a successful study in worldviews and questions congruent with the philosophical underpinnings underlying the conceptual framework (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I used member checking, a reflective journal, and an audit trail throughout the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Member checking is a strategy in which the researcher solicits feedback from the research participants to ensure accuracy and authenticity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The participants received a copy of the preliminary analysis and “emerging findings” via email and had the opportunity to suggest

changes that “better capture[d]” their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 246). The participants did not suggest any changes to the preliminary analysis. Using a journal, I engaged in regular reflexive exercises to document how I was “affected by the research process” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 249). In the journal, I explored my experiences, assumptions regarding the guiding question, and how I arrived at a particular conclusion (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I shared the journal with a trusted colleague and we met regularly to discuss how my positionality influenced the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lastly, I employed an audit trail to ensure rigor. Researchers may use a log or audit trail to document each step of the process. The audit trail helps readers understand how the researcher arrived at their findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Chapter Summary

To highlight the unique experiences of multiracial and biracial women senior and mid-level administrators in higher education, and to create recommendations that will help administrators create socially just campus communities, I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine multi/biracial women. I situated my phenomenological study (van Manen, 2016) in the transformative paradigm (Creswell, 2014; Guido, Chávez, & Lincoln, 2010; Mertens, 2010; Romm, 2014) and used CRF as a lens to analyze and interpret the data. The next chapter explores the findings.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

Social identities, such as race and gender, affect how women of color in higher education experience interpersonal interactions and institutional policies and processes (Britton, 2013; Hill et al., 2016; Diehl, 2014; Nixon, 2016). Similar to monoracial women of color, the participants' race and gender influenced their experiences in their workplaces. The themes that emerged from the interviews include the saliency of race, experiences with race and racism, expectations, the impact of racism, challenging systems of oppression, and coping strategies. While most of the themes that emerged are specifically related to their race, the participants' perception of their identities as multi/biracial women influenced their interactions with others and how they navigated institutional policies, practices, and climate to fulfill their job responsibilities. While overarching themes emerged from the participants' various experiences, it is important to acknowledge that the specific racialized experiences vary due to the participants' phenotype and racial make-up of their mixed heritage. The following sections explore the themes that emerged from the interviews.

Saliency of Race

Throughout the interviews, all the multiracial and biracial women discussed the saliency of their race in the workplace. When asked which identity—race or gender—was most salient in their work setting, most of the participants stated race. Several participants noted that the saliency of their race and their racialized experiences influenced their decision to pursue their current positions in higher education and their commitment to social justice advocacy. Karen, who identifies as Black and White and who works in diversity education, commented, “I went

into this work because of racial experiences that I had [that] I didn't want other folks to have." Additionally, the multi/biracial women discussed the intersectionality of their race and gender in the workplace. While the participants feel that their identities as both women and multi/biracial individuals are equally important, several women stated that others perceive their race as most salient. Veronica, who identifies as Afro-Latinx, commented "so from my personal perception, my identity as a cis-woman is more salient for me. I think my top perceived identity is being Black." She went on to comment, "[f]or my students, I think the first thing they see is a Black chick." Rebecca, who identifies as Asian and Latinx, stated:

I would say first and foremost my most salient identities that show up for me, where I feel triggered or kind of picked out or singled out, for me are definitely being multiracial and a cisgender woman.

However, she went on to comment that others perceive her racial identity first. The current racial climate in the United States is especially significant for the participants. Several participants commented on the current sociopolitical climate and the recent acts of brutality within the Black community. The participants discussed how the current racial climate in the U.S. influenced the saliency of their race as women of color. Additionally, the participants discussed the current sociopolitical climate and how it influences their identities and their work. Therefore, the participants discussed their racialized experiences more than their experiences based on their gender. This is reflected in the other themes that emerged. All participants shared experiences in which they are the victims of racism perpetrated by monoracial or White individuals.

Experiences with Race, Racism, and Sexism

Because of the nature and scope of their positions, the participants interact with a diverse body of constituents on their campuses. The multi/biracial women described regular interactions with colleagues, students, parents, chief executives, and faculty that differ based on the identities

of the person with whom they are interacting. The most common themes that emerged from the interviews about the participants' experiences in the workplace are the monoracism and microaggressions perpetrated by their colleagues, students, and faculty based on the mixed racial heritage of the multi/biracial women. The participants experienced different types of monoracism such as outsider status (Harris, 2017a; Renn, 2003), assumptions about their behavior (Britton, 2013; Hill et al., 2016), and objectification (Museus et al., 2015; Nadal et al., 2011; Rockquemore & Brunσμα, 2004). Additionally, several participants experienced instances in which administrators capitalized on their identities.

Assumptions of Behavior

Women of color experience a unique form of discrimination based on stereotypes about their racial heritage (Mendenhall, Harwood, & Browne Hunt, 2016). The stereotypes include assumptions about their behavior in the workplace. Similarly, multiracial and biracial women can experience assumptions about their behavior based on their racial heritage and phenotype (Nishimura, 2004). Similar to multiracial and biracial college students, the participants in this study experienced monoracism in the form of assumptions about their racial identity (Harris, 2017a). Participants described experiences in which others assumed that they act according to racial stereotypes based on their race and gender (e.g., angry Black woman). Veronica, who identifies as Afro-Latinx, is often told that she is abrasive and that her direct style of communication is offensive and disrespectful. Veronica attributes the comments about her behavior to White fragility, a state of emotional distress experienced by White individuals and triggered by racially stressful situations (DiAngelo, 2011). When racially familiar situations or circumstances where White supremacy is threatened, White individuals may experience racial tension and may engage in behaviors, such as argumentation and defensiveness, to reinstate

racial normalcy (DiAngelo, 2011). Veronica's White colleagues experience racial tension when Veronica openly confronts them. They become defensive and are quick to label her behavior as inappropriate. However, when her White colleagues address a co-worker in a similar manner as Veronica, their behavior is described as assertive or the behavior is excused. Veronica stated,

I've been told that I come across as mean. This has specifically been from White women and I'll say fragile White men, who were like, 'I felt like you were questioning my competencies, and like you were blaming me.' . . . For me it's like, I'm coming from a place of care . . . and I think . . . it's their definitely perceptions of me as a woman of color.

Conversely, Elizabeth who identifies as White and Asian, commented about how her colleagues are often surprised when she is assertive. She stated:

Much as any woman who uses more direct communication, or if you tell someone to do something, even when you're their supervisor, it's not always received the same way if you're a man. I think the fact that I'm White and Asian also plays into that. Because I'm not a Black woman, I don't come across as what someone might stereotype as an angry Black woman, but I think there's been this shock that I'm direct in my communication, because they assume I'm going to be more docile.

Bryant, who identifies as Japanese and White, experiences similar interactions with others. She expressed:

[B]ecause I'm Asian, before they meet me, they expect me to be younger than I am, different, I think people are surprised when I'm assertive because it's not what they were expecting. . . . I think that I surprise people a lot.

Danielle, who identifies as African and White, noticed that she has access to more spaces and people than her monoracial female colleagues because others assume she is "going to be more compatible, more easy to get along with". She commented:

Me specifically as a biracial woman, I think again based on people's assumptions of me and what I look like, I think there's an expectation that I'm going to show up to spaces and act a certain way. Act a little more proper if you will. There's always this like shock when I say something. They're like, "What? I can't even believe you said that, let alone feel that way." Some of the administrators I had never interacted with. They look at you like, "Why is she talking so much? Why does she have so many things to say?"

In addition to assumptions about their behavior, the participants stated that others make assumptions about their professional interests and knowledge. Bryant expressed:

But there is an assumption and probably more so from like straight, White people, but there is an assumption of knowledge, right, if you're a person of color about everything that may or may not actually be there. And so, I think because of that, you know, there are times that I can get asked to do things or represent issues that I don't necessarily feel like I have expertise in.

Sarah notices that people make assumptions about her professional interests, abilities, and education based on her identities and phenotype. Because Sarah presents as a monoracial Black woman, people often assume that she is only interested in or knowledgeable about Black issues. She commented:

I think that as a woman of color I am often identified as having interests, abilities, or inabilities that do not necessarily belong to me, but that are stereotypically attached to me. People often make the assumption that because I'm a person of color the only thing I know about higher education, or that I'm interested in about higher education are things having to do with race and identity. Being visually identifiable as I'll say a Black woman specifically makes it so that again those assumptions about me, and about what my stance might be, what my perspective might be, what my experiences are inform the way that other people approach me. A good example of that is the ways in which people, when someone who knows me may refer to me as [doctor], it's always interesting watching the faces of people who don't really know that I have a PhD. I can sense a shift in attitude sometimes amongst some people, and that's always very interesting. There's a renewed respect that's being paid to the position that was not there for me as a person initially.

The multiracial/biracial women experienced instances in which other individuals made assumptions about them because of their mixed-racial heritage. While the participants experienced multiracial microaggressions based on assumptions about their behavior, interest, and abilities, the women in the study encountered different assumptions based on their phenotype and racial ancestry. The Asian multiracial/biracial women were expected to be docile while the phenotypically Black multiracial/biracial women were expected to display stereotypical depictions of Black women (i.e., angry Black woman). In addition to assumptions about their behavior, the several participants experienced objectification and sexualization.

Objectification

Similar to multiracial/biracial college students and women in clinical settings (Museus et al., 2015; Nadal et al., 2011; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2004), several participants in the study described instances of objectification because of their physical appearance. The participants expressed how White and monoracial colleagues comment on their exoticism and sexualize them because of their phenotype, how they dress, and/or how the participants style their hair. Rebecca stated that her supervisor and her colleagues consistently comment on how exotic she appears.

She expressed:

I feel constantly sexualized and I feel sometimes wary of saying that because people take it the wrong way when I have discussed it with my colleagues or friends or even my partner, “oh, are people hitting on you?” And I'm like, that's not necessarily it, it's more so that people constantly comment on my appearance about how exotic I am and how beautiful I am and my skin is so different. . . my appearance has to do with how my multiracial identity shows up physically for me and how I'm taken “seriously” in meetings. . . . I have to look more mature, especially when I'm going to meetings where there are a lot of cisgender men to make sure there's no type of a sexualization on my part.

When describing her relationship with her supervisor, Rebecca recalled an incident that occurred during a professional conference. While Rebecca and her supervisor were walking together, Rebecca's supervisor, who identifies as a Black woman, said to her, “it's so hard walking around with you because everyone is just stopping and complimenting you. You're like my own little sex symbol.” The supervisor's comment deeply affected Rebecca and now Rebecca feels hypersensitive about her appearance in the workplace. As Veronica was discussing the various ways that she is objectified, she described an experience in which a White stakeholder compared her to a unicorn. Veronica explained:

I know that's what people think of me when they see me. “She's so cute with her head wrap and she's just so urban.” It's fetishized . . . [my stakeholders are] just like, “Oh, yeah she's different.” Someone literally said to me . . . “you're like a unicorn. You're rare and different and people know you exist but it's not until they meet you that they're like wow people like this exist?”

Similar to Rebecca and Veronica, Danielle notices that she receives a lot of unwanted attention from male students and colleagues because of her physical appearance. The men approach her and comment on her skin tone, hair, and physical attributes. Danielle commented, “I have seen so much sexualization of me, whether it's male students or colleagues even. People just feel way more comfortable being like, ‘Hey girl, you so beautiful.’” Several of the participants in the study experienced objectification by White individuals and other people of color because of their phenotype. Overwhelmingly, most participants shared experiences in which White individuals sought them out because of their identities.

Capitalizing on Identities

The multiracial/biracial women in the study described instances in which their supervisors, colleagues, and other administrators used the participants because of their race and/or gender to gain some type of advantage or benefit. Unlike interest convergence in which the individual and the institution benefit from a microaggression or act of racism perpetrated against the multiracial individual (Harris, 2016), the participants experienced circumstances in which only the institution benefited. Although the specific experiences of the participants varied based on their phenotype and racial ancestry, the multiracial and biracial women experienced instances where supervisors or colleagues used their identities to serve the institution’s needs. Daphne described experiences in which White colleagues used her identity as a multiracial woman to address the concerns of and support students of color. Her White colleagues used her as a bridge between White administrators and students of color. She commented:

At [my previous institution], a Black sorority was trying to form, and [the institution] doesn’t have sororities, so I was used as like, “Okay, [Daphne’s] here, she's gonna enforce the policy, and look, she's Black.” And I was like, wait, hold on, time out. That is not at all why I'm here. . . . T]hat's definitely put a wedge between me and my Black students at that institution. . . . [T]hey saw me as a puppet, even though I was the one battling for them on the other end.

Rebecca's supervisor takes advantage of Rebecca's appearance to gain a benefit for her office.

Because Rebecca's supervisor perceives her as attractive, the supervisor will ask Rebecca to take on responsibilities that do not fall under her purview. Rebecca explained:

But I also think that she's been guilty of manipulating situations based upon the way that I show up as biracial or multiracial. An example will be that she will take advantage of the fact that because I'm "racially ambiguous" sending me in to go talk to someone. Or, because I am attractive and exotic and all these different things that people label me as, she'll send me to speak with vendors to negotiate prices.

She went on to comment:

I sometimes say to my peers at other institutions, I feel like I don't belong to myself, that I kind of am like one of those Russian dolls where—there's so many layers to me that people pick and change which one they want for the day and I never get to be just wholly, intersectionally me.

Rebecca's colleagues and other administrators will choose one of Rebecca's racial identities to suit their needs at the time. Similarly, Angie described a situation in which the institution sought her out because of her Asian ancestry. Although Angie communicated that she identifies as biracial, the institution placed her in a monoracial category to meet their need at the time. Angie stated:

[T]hey are always looking for someone who is Asian to be on these committees who's a faculty or staff member, that is always what's placed on me, or they're like, "We need diverse staff to be in this human resources photo." Even a couple days ago, I got this email this time from someone I knew who I think makes you take those emails a little better. I've gotten cold call emails before saying, "Oh, we're looking through the staff directory and see that you self-identified in the system as Asian." I'm like, "Well, if you actually look in the HR system, I clicked two buttons. I guarantee you I did." I even went and checked did you switch this on me? I think that's what the university thinks they need. They want to focus on one aspect, because right now that's what they're looking for.

Sarah commented that the administration in her institution uses her for their benefit quite often. Working in diversity education, Sarah anticipates that this will happen occasionally.

However, she stated that it becomes problematic when racial issues arise and the institution uses her identities as a woman of color to address the concerns. She explained:

It becomes problematic when there are issues, and rather than it being an event that may be somewhat celebratory, or whatever the case may be, it becomes an issue in which people are unhappy, and I get trotted out as somehow being the solution to the issue. Somehow I'm the one who can single handedly take care of the issue, or being trotted out as an example of just the very fact that I exist the issue should not exist. That's when it becomes problematic.

During the interviews, the participants described several different types of racism that is perpetrated by monoracial and White colleagues, students, faculty, and staff based on the mixed racial heritage and phenotype of the multi/biracial women. The participants experience different types of racism, assumptions about their behavior (Britton, 2013; Hill et al., 2016), objectification (Museus et al., 2015; Nadal et al., 2011; Rockquemore & Brunnsma, 2004), and instances in which other administrators capitalized on their race. In addition to the racism perpetrated by monoracial and White individuals, the multi/biracial women experience questioned authenticity and/or outsider status.

Questioned Authenticity and Outsider Status

Outsider status occurs when monoracial individuals challenge the authenticity of a biracial or multiracial individual as a legitimate member of a monoracial group (Hall, 2004; Kellogg & Liddell, 2012; Harris, 2017a; Museus et al., 2016). Monoracial individuals view the multiracial/biracial person as an outsider or a non-member of the monoracial group. Angie, who identifies as Asian and White, felt a “strange tension” as the only multiracial person on her team. The interactions between her and her White colleagues differed from the interactions between her White colleagues and their monoracial colleagues of color. White women engaged Angie in conversations about race in order to seek her validation as a woman of color. However, the White women did not engage their monoracial women colleagues in the same conversations. It became evident to Angie that the White women distinguished her from monoracial women of

color because they did not see her as a member of a monoracial group. In essence, they challenged her authenticity as a legitimate Asian woman. Angie stated:

I felt like [my White colleagues'] interactions with me would sometimes be different than how—so for example the White folks would interact with me in a different way than they might interact with other folks of color on our team.

Sarah, who identifies as Japanese and Black, does not mention her racial identity in the company of her monoracial Black colleagues to avoid multiracial microaggressions and monoracism. When she disclosed her biracial identity in the company of Black colleagues in the past, Sarah experienced a hierarchy of oppression based on heritage and phenotype. Based on her racialized experiences, Sarah believes that the Black community can perpetrate racism within its community through a hierarchy of race and perpetuates White supremacy due to internalized racism. She experiences this in multiracial microaggressions such as being told that she is not monoracial enough to understand the experiences of the Black community (Harris, 2017a).

Sarah stated:

I don't hide it in any way, but I don't bring up the fact that I'm biracial unless someone asks, or unless it's relevant to a conversation, or something that may be occurring at that moment. Particularly when I am among Black folk I specifically make it a point not to mention it, unless again it is directly approached, because it's interesting how there is such a hierarchy of Blackness. . . . In some people's minds. . . I'm less likely to be subjected to police brutality somehow because I'm also part of another race, and not fully Black.

Sarah selectively discloses her biracial identity to avoid monoracism (Storrs, 1999). Daphne, who identifies as Black and Filipino-American, questions whether her Black students see her as a mentor because of her mixed Filipino/Black heritage. She worries that her monoracial Black students do not perceive her as “Black enough” to serve as a mentor. Daphne expressed:

I think growing up with a multiracial identity, I've always struggled with being enough in both aspects. What does that mean for my Black identified students who might have a certain idea of what Blackness means for them? When they meet me, and if I meet up to those expectations of who they want in a “Black mentor.”

Danielle, who identifies as White and Black, experienced multiracial microaggressions from her Black students when she served as the Assistant Director of the African American Cultural Center. The Black students who frequented the Cultural Center questioned Danielle's authenticity as a Black individual because of her biraciality. Believing that individuals with mixed White/Black heritage are not authentically Black, the students challenged her ability to effectively fulfill her role as the Assistant Director of the Center. The students perceived her as not monoracial enough to understand their needs and therefore be an effective leader. Additionally, the students believed the Center was a space for only Black individuals. Danielle explained:

I think a lot of people felt like I shouldn't have my job in the [African American Cultural Center]. Who's this half White girl coming in? Some students, and they never particularly said anything, but in that conversation [about interracial romantic relationships] they were pretty vocal about what they felt about how they didn't prefer, didn't understand interracial relationships specifically between Black men and White women, specifically. . . . No one ever came out directly and said, "You don't belong here," but . . . I kind of gathered that some students felt that one, White people weren't really welcomed in that space, and two, people who engage in interracial relationships or I guess products of interracial relationships weren't 100% authentically Black, so they kind of challenged and questioned me more than I felt they questioned or challenged my colleague.

Because of her mixed-race heritage, Danielle's students did not believe she was authentically Black and therefore treated her as an outsider. Bryant, who identifies as Japanese and White, stated that when interacting with her colleagues of color, she feels embraced as a part of the community but feels like an outsider as well. She commented on how her constituents perceive her and she wonders if they question her legitimacy as an Asian. She went on to say, "there is this question in the back of my mind, like what do they think of my Asian-ness because I know that's a thing. So there's like this legitimacy, it's like are you really Asian?" Similarly, Rebecca who identifies as Guyanese/Asian and Latinx, stated "I think that the different racialized communities, I sometimes feel this pressure or this responsibility to be prove my in-ness." When

describing her experiences with Latinx and Asian colleagues, Rebecca stated that she feels the need to prove that she possesses enough monoracial characteristics/knowledge to belong to the communities. She went on to comment:

With our Asian community . . . I feel completely excluded because I did not grow up in India, Pakistan, Nepal, or any other country I haven't named, like the Middle East or anything like that because I don't speak Hindi and I don't speak any of the other languages that are kind of specific to those people. . . . [T]he faculty who identify as Pakistani or Indian will have lunch together and they'll speak in Hindi and I'll just be like, "I don't know what to do so I'm just going to cut my chicken into pieces so I look busy." So, I think sometimes I feel on edge that I have to prove myself that I belong.

Rebecca also commented on her experiences with monoracial Black women. In her interactions with monoracial women of color who are faculty and staff, Rebecca stated that she feels like an outsider because of her hair. She stated:

I also feel a lot of anxiety about my physical appearance in those spaces with the women of color who are faculty and staff members based upon conversations around their hair and discrimination based upon hair. They ask me my opinions on beauty issues and things like that and I am sometimes dismissed because I don't get it, [they say] "well Rebecca, you don't get it because you've never been turned down a job because you have braids, or you wore your hair natural." And I don't think that they're saying that to be hurtful to me or to be oppressive, I think that they truly just don't see me as Black.

Most participants described instances where others told them or made them feel that they were not monoracial enough. Additionally, some of the multiracial/biracial women who participated in this study questioned their own legitimacy as members of a monoracial group or questioned how other monoracial individuals perceived the participants' authenticity. The participants also shared stories in which White individuals sought them out rather than monoracial women of color because of their identities.

White Comfortability

A theme that emerged from several participants is the notion of White comfortability. A result of White fragility, White comfortability are instances in which White individuals seek out

multiracial/biracial individuals to assuage their guilt and/or maintain their racial comfort. For example, the participants described instances in which White faculty, staff, and administrators would interact with them rather than their monoracial women colleagues because the White individuals perceived the multiracial/biracial women as less threatening. The participants believe that the White individuals preferred to interact with them because the multi/biracial women's race and gender made the White individuals feel more comfortable than their monoracial peers. The White individuals assumed the multi/biracial women would not challenge the status quo, have a better understanding of and tolerance for the White individuals' perspectives, and would support the White individuals' point of view. For example, several of the multi/biracial women were invited into predominately Whites spaces because White individuals assumed the participants were, as Danielle described, "easier" to work with based on their multiracial/biracial identities. Danielle commented:

I do think that I was able to access some spaces or able to have conversations with some people that might avoid [monoracial] Black women, for instance. I'm not proud of that. They would never say that they were avoiding so-and-so, but just by how they navigate the space, they're not necessarily happy to set up lunch meetings with my boss [who is a monoracial Black woman] for instance, but they'll come to me. . . that's something that I'm recognizing and being aware of as an experience that I think is unique to mine as a biracial woman.

Rebecca also experiences White comfortability in her workplace. Her White colleagues often tell her that they prefer to work with her instead of her supervisor who identifies as a Black woman. Rebecca stated that her White colleagues comment to her, "I didn't want to ask your supervisor because dot, dot, dot, dot, but you know we love working with you and you're a joy to work with because you make us feel like we're not as racist as we seem." Rebecca also noticed that her White colleagues prefer to work with her rather than her Black colleagues. She expressed:

[S]ome of my colleagues who had been here for a long time would circumvent my Black colleagues because I am not “Black” and I would perceive it as, I’m a person of color but I’m not an “angry Black woman” through that stereotype that they would view my other colleagues. And so, I would be contacted or asked to partner on things that were out of my area or prevue. I’m very hypersensitive to that... And so I’ve had to navigate really uncomfortable conversations where people feel comfortable approaching me about how, “Rebecca, you’re so good with race and you make me feel very comfortable and you’re not angry or you’re not . . . aggressive in comparison to [your supervisor].” And that they would prefer to work with me because I am ... what they have said to me, “you know, you’re not like that.” And when I ask them “what do you mean by that,” it becomes a really uncomfortable, “well, you know, she’s Black and she only identifies with Black students and Black colleagues and, you know, you’re just this really exotic swirl.”

Rebecca went on to comment that White faculty, staff, and a few board of trustee members prefer to interact with her because she makes “them feel safe because of their anti-Blackness.

‘Well she’s not Black so she’s closer to me than she is to Black folks.’” Danielle’s White colleagues make comments to Danielle about other women of color. Danielle remarked:

Some comments that I feel like were said in front of me that would never be said in front of [monoracial women of color], I don’t know if that had to do with their position as directors or of my skin color, by the fact that people may have assumed that I wasn’t Black, I don’t know. Comments were made ... In that moment having to recognize again the privilege of maybe I’m accessing this space as a biracial woman in a way that [monoracial women of color] are not. Maybe people aren’t giving me the same comments or saying the same comments to me that they’re saying to them. Again, I see more often than not this blind trust of me versus of them.

When describing an interaction with a colleague, Angie noticed how her White colleagues would use her to validate their experiences. She stated:

In particular, I am thinking of one White woman who was really struggling. Sometimes she was showing up in a way that kind of dismissed and invalidated the experiences of the women of color on our team and that would create conflict. That conflict would be public. So we were all in those conversations and we all knew about that. But then she would find time, she would like come to the office unannounced and want to process with me. It was almost felt like it was one of those issues where, almost like she was trying to validate her experience with another woman of color. But I’m also wondering how she got to me as someone who is mixed, if I was a safer person to come to and seek that validation and be able to process.

When asked about her experience, Veronica stated that her White colleagues and administrators often assume that she is a safer woman of color than her monoracial peers because of her mixed heritage and phenotype. She expressed:

People look at the outer. Me identifying as Afro-Latinx, and being brown skinned, right before the paper bag test brown, I'm like a safe Black chick. I get it. I get it. I totally understand it, and I hate it. . . . So I'm a brown girl, and I have curly hair, and I speak Spanish. I am not too dark, right? Not too light. So I am able to be Black, but it's okay that I identify as Latina for people and I have "good" hair, you know? And I speak Spanish and I understand lingo and I'm that "cool sister" or that "cool auntie", so it's like, "Oh, we can bring her in." And I feel like they see me as the one that . . . I'm radical but I'm not too radical. But, at the same time, I'm sassy because I'm a Latina so that's allowed.

Veronica's White peers and administrators feel more comfortable with what they perceive as Veronica's "radical" behavior versus her monoracial Black colleagues' because Veronica's lighter skinned, racially ambiguous phenotype makes them feel less threatened (i.e., good hair, speaks Spanish). They tolerate or dismiss her behavior as "sassy" because of her Latinx heritage and think of her as "cool" or accepting of their behavior because they do not perceive her as a member of a monoracial group (i.e., she's closer to White than monoracial). When describing an interaction with her supervisor, Daphne expressed how both White and monoracial people of color perceive her identity as a "toned down version of a Black administrator" because of her biracial heritage. Bryant commented that her identities as a biracial woman make her White students feel more comfortable with her because she's "not just Asian." She went on to comment that she utilizes her identities to make her White students, colleagues, and other administrators feel more comfortable so they are receptive to critical feedback.

During the interviews, most participants described instances in which White colleagues, students, and administrators preferred to interact or work with them instead of their monoracial colleagues. The White individuals feel more comfortable working with the multiracial/biracial woman due to preconceived assumptions based on stereotypes about women of color. The

multi/biracial women used phrases such as a “safe person” or “toned down” when describing themselves in these situations and some participants attribute the White individuals’ behavior to White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011). In addition to White comfortability perpetrated by White administrators, the participants experience external and internal expectations. The next section explores this theme.

Expectations

Several multi/biracial women in this study experience expectations they believe are due to their racial heritage and/or phenotype. During the interviews, several participants described two different types of expectations: internal and external. External expectations included additional responsibilities, which the participants’ defined as invisible or emotional labor, and next, internal responsibility. Internal expectations included personal responsibility to assume additional tasks.

External Expectations

Because of their gender and phenotype, several participants experience additional and/or different expectations than their White colleagues. When in majority White spaces, Elizabeth is often expected to take on administrative responsibilities that do not fall within her prevue. She explained:

I think for me what it really means is that when I am in spaces with colleagues, when I'm in particularly in a room and I'm the person in charge, and I mentioned I still constantly see people looking to me or looking to the other women of color to take notes. What the hell? They're little things like that. It's 2017, and it still sometimes feels like it's 1956 where we do have a voice at the table, we might have a seat at the table, and I'd still like you to take notes and get coffee at this table.

Elizabeth’s male colleagues are not typecast as caretakers or administrative assistants nor are they expected to complete similar tasks. Angie stated that at a pervious institution, the women faculty and staff of color carried additional responsibilities. She explained:

Well, as a woman of color, I think the unspoken expectations that we do sometimes have in the category of “other duties assigned” is also that invisible labor that we never really talk about. But that we are holding a lot of our students of color. You know, playing an additional support role that sometimes men are not asked to play. Especially for students of color who do not see a lot of representation on campus. It's just an expectation right. We have all of those additional “responsibilities” in addition to what our other colleagues are doing too. And they don't hold those identities then are not taking on as much.

Invisible labor is spoken and unspoken expectations or responsibilities, such as service activities and diversity initiatives that administrators place on people of color (Aguirre, 200; Luna et al., 2010). Veronica commented:

[T]he students of color are gonna come to [women of color] automatically until they figure out whether they trust us or not. They're gonna come to us because “I see someone that looks like me.” Then it's also whatever our job is. So, [women of color are] typically in the caring or compliance role so that people come to us as it is. So, then all the ones that, on top of that, are like “the other,” right? So whether it's trans folks, or Latino folks, or people that aren't how I identify, come to me because they feel like, “She's different and she gets people that are different and I'm gonna come to her.” So, now I have . . . not just my job, and what I think is my duty, but everybody's else's.

When asked to provide an example of invisible labor, Angie describe an incident in which she was asked to take-on additional responsibilities because of her identities. She commented:

[A]t both institutions I was tapped to be an advisor to a mixed group. Sometimes there isn't that representation and there's such a strong desire from multiracial folks to like, “Yes, there is another person our multiracial students can go to” . . . [A]fter some biased incidents happened at one of my campuses, they put together a ton of different task forces. They had this big project of fixing the issue. A lot of the entry-level folk wanted to be a part of that because I think there was some capital in that. Working on these task forces with people in upper management. . . . [A] couple of like colleagues reached out to me from different committees and they said there was no more room for them. And then a couple days later I get an email inviting me to be a part of that same committee.

Sarah feels additional expectations regarding how she must present herself in White spaces. Because of racial stereotypes about women of color, Sarah, who serves as a senior level diversity educator, feels that she is at an intersection of race, gender, and other people's

expectations in terms of how she presents her identities and the role she fulfills on her campus as a phenotypically Black woman who identifies as multiracial. She explained:

[T]he interesting thing is even as we stand at the intersection of identity, of being people of color, and being women, we also stand at this intersection of how we are to present those identities. . . . The intersection that I confront often is this intersection between being of course the polished professional, as one is expected to be, as everyone is expected to be once you reach a certain level, in most industries, but particularly in higher education. And, because of the work that I do. . . but it's also because of the identities I bring to the table. [I'm] [e]xpected to be what I refer to as the "Earth Mother." As a woman of color, you are to be nurturing. You are to care about people. You are to want what is good for people. That is seen as your role. Now, there are exceptions to the rule . . . but by and large . . . Black women [are] the "Earth Mother."

She went on to comment:

The Black woman always ends up being the catalyst, always ends up being the savior that somehow brings everybody together in the end, whatever dysfunctional unit it is, brings the saving grace. Again, part of it in my case is because of positionality as well, holding a role like a [senior level diversity educator]. The goal is to create opportunities for inclusion, and so I'm seen as being central to that in personhood in many ways, which feeds into this sort of conceptualization of the Black woman. I think that I am expected to play that role, as well as expected to be the uber professional.

Because of the intersectionality of her race, gender, and position, administrators expect Sarah to be nurturing and caring while being the ultimate professional. Similarly, Rebecca feels that she is expected to be the multiracial "savior" who heals racial tension and corrects microaggressions perpetrated on her campus. She explained:

I think that the expectations other people place on me have a lot to do with assuaging their guilt or their behavior. That because I'm not one but I am of many, I'll be tricked—and I use the word tricked pretty intentionally here—into having these meetings or coffee dates or lunch dates where I am kind of put in a position where I have to counsel someone based upon their misstep as a White, racist person, or a person of color who is perpetrating racism or someone who is talking about xenophobia and homophobia and antisemitism and all these different components that affect me because of my identities. So I find that the expectations people place on me are a lot of what I can do for them, the caretaker role, the in-between person role, the "I plan on talking to this person but I want to kind of role play with you or run it by you first, because you know, you get it."

Similar to Sarah and Rebecca, Daphne also feels that she is expected to resolve the racial tension between her supervisor and Black students. When she was hired in her role, Daphne's supervisor expected her to address the concerns of the Black students because Daphne identifies as Black and Filipino-American. She expressed:

[When] I got brought in it was almost like my multiracial identity as being Black and Asian was meant to be the healing between, the connection between my Asian supervisor and my Black students. So there was constant pressure on me to be the communicator, the one who communicated policy for Black students, the one who kept them in line, or made sure they were following policy. I felt this pressure of I'm this bridge between these identities, which felt unfair a lot of the time, then also just felt like, then whose work is it, if I'm supposed to be this savior?

Several participants described external expectations that are placed on them by monoracial and White individuals because of their phenotype and racial heritage. Additionally, the multi/biracial women who participated in this study expressed instances in which they experience internal responsibilities because of their race.

Internal Expectations

Three participants discussed the internal responsibility or pressure they experience because of systemic oppression in the workplace. Bryant feels internal responsibility for addressing social justice issues that affect communities of color because she is a woman of color. She described an incident in which she assumed additional responsibilities to support diversity education on her campus. Recognizing the need for diversity training, Bryant decided to create and facilitate a division-wide diversity initiative. Although the training was successful, Bryant commented, "I don't know if I had been . . . a White woman, I don't know that I would have said, like I need to take responsibility and do this because no one else is going to do this." She went on to state, "I definitely think [expectations are] internal just in terms of that sense of responsibility, but . . . I think it both gets put on me and I have a responsibility to give voice."

Similarly, Rebecca feels internal expectations to address White supremacy and microaggressions in her workplace. She commented:

But I feel this overwhelming responsibility to do better around anti-Blackness because I am also aware of this space that I have between the subjugation of Black people versus the subjugation I experience, or my community has experienced as non-Black people of color.

Karen also feels internal pressure to perform for Whiteness and people of color. She feels the need to present herself in a certain manner to succeed in her role. She explained:

[I]t's this expectation to be a superwoman and to be a super role-model and to be a strong Black woman and to be like this leader on campus that's badass, all of these expectations and to be the most knowledgeable person about all issues equity related and to show up and have the answers when I'm asked.

While manifesting differently, Bryant, Rebecca, and Karen's internal responsibility is similar to the other participants' experiences in that it results from the racism they experience as women of color working in systems of oppression within higher education. The participants in the study experience both monoracial and multiracial expectations due to their racial heritage and phenotype. Overall, the racism perpetrated against the participants deeply impacts the multi/biracial women in this study. The next section explores the various impact on the participants.

Impact of Racism and Sexism on the Individual

The various forms of racism and sexism perpetrated by White individuals and monoracial people of color deeply affect the multiracial/biracial women in this study. The participants described various effects such as feeling anxious and exhausted, questioning the motives of others, and questioning themselves. The following sections explore these themes.

Emotional Impact: Anxiety and Exhaustion

Several participants described feeling anxious and/or exhausted by their racialized experiences in the workplace. Angie, who identifies as Asian and White, stated that she feels anxious when working in majority White spaces and often wonders how others perceive her behavior. She worries that her actions in majority White spaces perpetuate White supremacy.

She explained:

Sometimes I experience a lot of anxiety. . . . I might be in a meeting or working with different stakeholders and wondering about how I'm showing up as a woman or how I might be showing up as a multiracial person. Some of my anxiety can come from, am I colluding [with White supremacy]? That's definitely something that comes up for me. And both of those identities, especially . . . the intersections of it. I think being mixed Asian-White there's a lot there.

Rebecca commented that she sometimes feels exhausted when her monoracial peers make assumptions about her based on her identities. She explained:

I feel a level of exhaustion when sometimes [my monoracial peers] say, “well, you know,” and I actually don’t. And so I feel like I'm always walking a tightrope, even it’s a low-risk, we're just having lunch, shooting the breeze, talking about the NBA playoffs. I literally am sometimes always on edge that my authenticity as a Latinx person is called into question.

She went on to comment, “I begin my days with this level of anxiety mixed with guilt around my physical appearance” because of the comments that she receives about her phenotype. She spends “a lot of emotional energy and work” to hide her reactions to the multiracial microaggressions that she experiences in the workplace. It becomes “a constant stress” for her.

Karen stated that she often feels exhausted by the conversations that her colleagues and other administrators have with her regarding her phenotype and racial identities. The burden of educating individuals who have a very limited understanding of race is exhausting for her. She stated:

[B]ecause my peers and above, and folks who . . . only understand race as one-dimensional or mono, . . . like they understand race as solo categories, right, so you

are only Black or you are only White or you are only brown. And that's a difficult conversation. It's even more difficult to try and engage in a conversation about what it means to be biracial and what that looks like. And how I feel and how I show up and how some days it's just a different conversation for me, and why some days I wear my hair curly, and why some day I press it. It's too exhausting of a conversation and it's too personal of a conversation to have with folks who I don't think are engaged in my development.

Veronica shared that the constant need to double-check her work because she believes that White individuals hold her to different expectations as a woman of color produces anxiety for her. She commented:

I've always had a struggle with my anxiety and my depression, but especially my anxiety. . . . I feel like I have to look over my shoulder and cover my behind all the time especially working with the majority because I feel like . . . I don't have the same privileges that [White individuals] do.

Veronica's anxiety and depression stem from her hypervigilance about her work performance.

She believes that she isn't afforded the same privileges and ability to make mistakes in her role.

Elizabeth, who identifies as Asian and White, stated that she feels exhausted when her institution consistently asks her to take on additional responsibilities based on her racial identities that fall outside her preveue. She commented, "in the university, they want to phrase it as you get to participate, but sometimes that labor is really emotionally exhausting." She went on to explain that conversations about race and gender with various stakeholders can be "emotionally draining."

Deeply aware of the current social and political racial climate and its impact on higher education, Bryant stated that the constant White privilege that she encounters in her workplace and in society has an emotional impact on her. She specifically commented on the sociopolitical racial climate and its impact on her role as a higher education administrator. She explained:

But I think probably since the election, yeah, it gets exhausting—that part gets exhausting because I get tired of White people. Not individually, but just collectively, White culture. . . . [I]t's like I just don't want to be around White people or hearing White voices or having them in charge in politics because there's

so much damage that happens. But it's really hard for me to separate [the emotional impact of my work] from just the sociopolitical climate that we're in.

Several of the participants stated that they often feel anxious and/or exhausted from the microaggressions or expectations they experience in the workplace. It is important to note that the anxiety and exhaustion that the participants feel because of their experiences are not unique to multiracial/biracial women. Monoracial individuals reported similar feelings when they experience micro- and macroaggressions (Donovan et al., 2012; Nadal et al., 2014). In addition to the additional emotional burden, several of the participants expressed a level of uncertainty because of the microaggressions they experience in their workplace.

Questioning the Motivation of Others and Questioning Self

Several participants in the study expressed a level of uncertainty or insecurity because of microaggressions perpetrated by monoracial individuals of color and White individuals in the workplace. While the multi/biracial women respond differently to the various microaggressions that they experience, several participants doubt the motives of their White colleagues, and/or question themselves.

Questioning the motives of others. Because of the microaggressions that they experience in the workplace, several multiracial/biracial women question the motives of their White colleagues. After experiencing a microaggression perpetrated by a White female colleague, Angie now sometimes questions the motives of her White peers when discussing race and/or gender with them. She explained:

And now I think I have a little bit of question or can I trust folks when, in general, if folks now come to me and want to process. If they racialize things that are going on for them or gendered and how they might be leaning on me in a certain way to get their own validation at my expense in some ways. . . . It's not something that comes up for me all the time, but there are interactions that I've had with [White] faculty or staff that I question if that's the dynamic that [is] happening in our conversation, or what role that I'm playing . . . without even knowing it sometimes. I might be validating them in a way that is harmful.

Like Angie, Veronica sometimes questions the motives of her White colleagues and other administrators. After several negative experiences with a White female supervisor, Veronica does not always assume that her White colleagues have the best intentions when they interact with her. She expressed:

I'm not going to lie, I don't assume good intent in the beginning. If one thing happens, I automatically go "oh there you go, being a White girl," but that's not cool on my end, but that's how I've been trained to be.

Danielle also questions the motives of others. After recently being hired in a new role, Danielle wonders if her identity as a biracial woman and her phenotype were considered in addition to her qualifications. She wonders if she was hired because of her merit or her physical attributes. She explained:

[The new position] is in the south and the whole department is White. I don't know when they've had a brown person in there, and I'm like, I know I came in there, and I know my shit. Excuse my language. I know my stuff, but was I acceptable based on what I look like or what their assumptions are of me as a very fair skinned brown person? Was I good enough versus if my director [who identifies as a monoracial Black woman] had walked in the door, would they have hired her the same way? . . . [I]s this something that I'm able to navigate based on their assumptions of me as a light skinned person? What does that mean? Not knowing, they don't know that I'm half White, half Black. Based on their assumptions of what I am, those are questions that I had.

Because of the microaggressions that they experienced, three of the participants question the motives of White administrators. While each experience varied due to the specific circumstances of the incident, now the participants sometimes wonder if they can trust their White colleagues when their peers seek them out or when the participants interact with White individuals in racialized situations. The lack of trust is a significant outcome of the microaggressions that these women experience. While Danielle, Veronica, and Angie question the motives of others, several participants question themselves because of the microaggressions they experience in the workplace.

Questioning self. Several participants described instances in which they questioned themselves because of the microaggressions they experienced in the workplace. They questioned whether they are monoracial enough to be successful in their roles, how they portray themselves to others, and/or if they perpetuate White supremacy. Angie described the experience as an internal dialogue that plays over in her head. She explained:

I'm in my head, but kind of a running thing. Like I'm often in my head, so, I might be in a meeting or working with different folks, different stakeholders and wondering about how I'm showing up as a woman or how I might be showing up as a multiracial person. . . And then Whiteness and in that am I showing up?. . . [N]ot only how am I showing up, but how are the folks I'm talking to right now reading me. I think all of those things.

Veronica often questions whether she is interpreting a racialized experience correctly. She wonders if she is “doing the most—am I being too black, am I being too Latina, how am I going to be accepted?” She described the internal dialogue as “checking” herself and explained:

I have conversations with myself, like are you taking this wrong, or are you assuming good intent, what are you doing?. . . For me, it's hard not to think something completely different and to constantly remind myself, [Veronica], is it you or is it them, is it you or is it them?. . . I frustrate myself because I feel like “did you let them go on that one, did you fall into. . . are you allowing their fragility and their White guilt to run the way that you're working with this?”

Rebecca stated that she feels guilty about how she responds to microaggressions perpetrated against people of color. She questions whether she appropriately confronts the behavior, and if not, whether she is perpetuating White supremacy. She explained:

I feel also very guilty sometimes that if I don't address things correctly, meaning address the anti-Blackness that shows up around me, that I am letting my Black colleagues down or I'm not doing enough. Or am I feeding into my own anti-Blackness where I was raised, you know, you're not “Black” and—but you are a person of color, so you have a little bit of agency, a little bit of better privilege, and I grapple with that learned behavior and how I navigate that.

Because of her insecurities, Daphne questions whether she is Black or Filipino-American enough to be an advocate for her students and a social justice activist in her role on campus. She stated:

I will say that in this day and age, I think my residual, “You're not enough in either of your identities,” also then clings to this I think undercurrent of social justice right now that, “You're not enough as an activist” as well.

She went on to comment:

I feel like it does really collect this residual feeling of feeling enough. What does it mean to feel enough for both communities, and almost to prove that I'm enough for both communities, even though that's really not possible for anyone, because people need a lot of things? So, my personal identity and personal struggles with what does it mean to be Black enough, what does it mean to be a Filipino enough, I think do come out in how I also then see expectations of myself.

Karen, who identifies as Black and White, questions whether she is Black enough to fulfill her role as a diversity educator. This manifests in her questioning her motives and her ability to do her job. She expressed:

[S]ometimes I don't feel enough in my Blackness to do this work, and that comes up all the time. . . . Doing this work is hard because sometimes I do default to that White socialization and it shows up as—I don't have White privilege, but my thoughts definitely show up in ways that support White supremacy, right, and so constantly having to check myself on like, “okay, but why do you feel this way?” But also having to constantly check myself about not feeling like am I good enough and what does that even mean to do [diversity] work and how can I show up as myself authentically and be accepted by everyone?

Karen went on to comment:

Oh man, I constantly question myself. . . and I think that enough question is around a lot of identities, right. . . . Constantly this, “I'm not White enough, I'm not Black enough, I'm not rich enough, I'm not thin enough, I'm not pretty enough, I'm not smart enough.” . . . For me, that “not enough” motto runs through my head every day and . . . if I'm not consciously battling it, it shows up in me being insecure and indecisive about things, and also withdrawn. . . . I think really, for me, it's this line of what does it mean to be a biracial person who does racial justice work, in particular when one of your parents is White?

Additionally, Veronica stated that the tension she experiences when she questions herself manifests as an internal struggle and feeling like an imposter in her work. She explained:

It's almost like a pull at myself. It's not that I want to be included in [the White majority's] world, but it's like I need to know what's going on because . . . I have Black and brown bodies that I don't know how to protect with the way that this society is in the United States, and I have to be part of the system to keep me

connected. I go about this in [majority White] spaces, and I love the fact that I'm allowed to be there, but I feel like damn. . . I feel so fake doing this. . . . I go home almost feeling like an imposter because I feel like shoot, I'm one of few people.

Due to the nature of her role on campus, Veronica must navigate White spaces consistently. The strategies that Veronica must employ to “be included” in majority White spaces make Veronica question her authenticity in these spaces. Because of her insecurities, Rebecca, who identifies as Asian and Latinx, would not engage with the Latinx community for fear that she wasn’t Latina enough. She explained:

So I don’t speak Spanish and that has been a huge insecurity of mine where I would in the past have said, well I'm not really Latina. . . . I don’t belong in this group, I wouldn't attend Latina-focused programs or like developmental opportunities, I would withdraw my application, I wouldn't even claim it, that’s the level of like deep insecurity I had.

Because of systemic oppression and microaggressions in their workplace, several participants doubt the motives of their White peers. When interacting with their White colleagues in racialized situations or contexts, several multi/biracial women in this study question the intentions of the White individuals. In contrast, several participants in this study experience self-doubt because of systemic oppression. They question their personal motives, abilities, and authenticity. Similar to the self-doubt and suspicion the participants experience because of racism in the workplace, several participants question how they should challenge systems of oppression while relying on the system for their livelihood.

Challenging the System

Due to the nature of their responsibilities, the participants navigate various systems within their institutions. The systems include student affairs, academic affairs, and broad, overarching structures such as compliance. While the specific work varies depending on the unit, several of the participants specifically expressed the need to challenge systems of oppression within their work environments. Several participants discussed the challenge of

working within oppressive systems while remaining authentic to themselves as multi/biracial women and social justice advocates. Angie often questions how she should challenge the system from within. She expressed:

[H]ow do I push up against [White supremacy] and keep my job? . . . How do I do that in a way that is effective and also safe? And that in itself feels like a gross conversation to have. At the end of the day, no matter what it still feels like I am participating in [systems of oppression].

Rebecca noted the challenge she experiences to remain authentic to herself as a biracial woman while she dismantles systems of oppression on her campus. She stated that it is a constant struggle for her to balance advocacy as a biracial woman and systematically confront discrimination. She commented:

I think I have to be up front and say that it's a constant struggle for me to balance the two. How do I exist in a system that constantly pushes me out or challenges my existence and my narrative versus how do I break it apart while still having to navigate it through things like politics of respectability, or the status quo?

Working within oppressive systems influences the way Rebecca fulfills her role on campus. She commented, "in my everyday life as a professional, it definitely shows up in terms of my mindset, my physical appearance, and how I show up collegially or professionally with my colleagues in terms of staff and faculty." Similarly, Daphne questions how she should challenge the systemic oppression within her organization while depending on the system for her livelihood. As an administrator, she recognizes that she is a part of the very systems of oppression that she is trying to dismantle. She expressed:

I also ask my friends, what does it mean for us to try and change this from within, if we use the whole, take down the master's house with the master's tools? But I also know my students are committed to getting their degrees here. I'd rather it be me than some other person that doesn't even think about these things.

Several of the participants specifically noted the delicate balance they experience dismantling systems of oppression from within as multi/biracial women. They expressed the

tension, anxiety, and discomfort they feel working in systems of oppression as social justice advocates. While the other participants did not specifically comment on the thoughts or feelings they experience while working to dismantle systems of oppression within higher education, it is important to note that the emerging themes provide an overall depiction of the experiences all of the multi/biracial women in this study have while working to undo systemic oppression within higher education. All participants used various strategies to successfully navigate the system. One strategy is leveraging their identities as multi/biracial women and White comfortability to access majority White spaces. All the participants leverage their identities to promote social justice on their campuses and support their students, staff, and colleagues.

Leveraging identities

Overwhelmingly, the participants use White Comfortability as a mechanism to advance social justice on their college campuses. Once they have access to the majority White spaces, the participants advocate for their students and work to dismantle oppression in a way that monoracial women of color may have difficulty due to racial stereotypes (e.g., angry Black woman). Bryant explained:

I get to show up as more than just—if I was an Asian woman, as more than just an Asian woman. So I can give voice to things in other ways and I think it gives me a little bit more flexibility. So an example is like this idea of the angry Black woman on a committee who is having to give voice to social injustice, if certain people aren't getting promoted, and I think for people in the majority, because they can't understand the complexity of the issues, they can start to just see that person as representing that one note. And so I think being biracial allows me to get around that just a little bit, I can give voice to things like when they need to be given voice to, but I'm not necessarily going to be—the stereotypes about me I think are going to be just a little bit more fluid.

Danielle uses her identities in a similar manner. She commented:

I used my access to certain rooms, or I used my voice to be vocal about the issues that I know I was experiencing and other women of color were experiencing, whereas I think that some other women of color didn't necessarily have access to that space.

When describing her interactions with her colleagues in majority White spaces, Karen, who identifies as Black and White, noted:

I often can show up at these tables and do the respectability politics and be the “good Negro” because I’ve learned how to be that growing up . . . but I think my biracial identity in particular with the Whiteness allows me to be much more comfortable in those situations.

Karen went on to express that she uses her White socialization to make her interactions with her White colleagues easier. She stated:

I still think I lean on some of that [White] socialization so that I feel more comfortable in the space and so that other folks feel more comfortable in the space, it’s again, like “okay, well you’re not one of those people of color, so”. . . . But leaning on my own socialization to also sort of say like, “I understand that this White woman is threatened and frightened by this Black student.” And so in understanding that socialization of that Whiteness and that White supremacy showing up in a way that that’s why she’s resistant—that’s why the White woman is resistant to working with this Black woman is her own fear or leaning on that socialization to try and make the problem better.

Bryant, who identifies as Japanese and White, stated that her identities as a biracial woman help her connect with her students. She commented:

[A]s someone who is White and Asian, people often can’t tell sort of what I am and people often think that I am—they may guess Filipino or they may guess multiracial or they’ll think I’m Latina, I’ve gotten that quite a bit. And so, I think because of that. . . students of color feel—I think feel very safe and comfortable talking with me about issues of race and/or oppression and there’s never a question about am I going to understand it, they just assume that I will. But I think for White students too, because I’m not—I’m not just Asian, they don’t tend to think that I’m just White although sometimes students will. But I think being biracial just makes lots of different types of people feel comfortable around me and so I think that’s a real advantage in terms of maneuvering systems and working with different types of people.

Bryant can see the perspective from somebody who is in the majority and helps them feel more comfortable so they’re more receptive to monoracial people’s perspective. At the same time, having a historically marginalized identity, Bryant understands the experiences of women of color. She described it as walking in both worlds and went on to comment:

[W]hat I understand as someone who is biracial is the intensity of discomfort that people who are in the majority feel about someone who is representing a minority. . . . I have a more intuitive understanding of what it feels like to be the majority . . . [and] I can see how much power people have, who are from marginalized communities because there's so much discomfort. . . . [S]o I think what I have the ability to do is to form relationships with people that can take into account their discomfort with difference, their discomfort with not knowing, their discomfort with fear about doing or saying the wrong thing and there's something about that that gives people just a little bit more freedom to relax and then. . . if there's something that needs to be said and I can say it.

Rebecca believes that her identities as a biracial woman help her effectively fulfill her role. She stated that her identities allow her to “build stakeholders around diversity and inclusion work” who believe that Rebecca has a unique understanding of their diverse experiences. She commented, “it helped that I was biracial because I could speak to so many of those experiences and I received a lot of buy-in.” Veronica stated that once she has access to majority White spaces, she engages her colleagues in conversations so that she can advance social justice. She explained:

And I use that to be able to get a platform of “let's talk”. . . . And I know that I get a platform because I'm a pretty brown girl that's hip enough and I'm not too “Black” and “let her come into our space, we need diversity.”

Veronica went on to comment:

[My identities] benefit the conversations and people are willing to listen to things about diversity and inclusion because I am in that room. I use it as my weapon. I absolutely cannot lie. I do. . . . I have to be strategic about it especially when I know I want to discuss something that involves race or gender even. It's like all right, it's coming from someone who's different and specifically looks different—and I do. I use it as my weapon.

Like Bryant, Veronica can address issues in majority White spaces that other monoracial women of color may find difficult because of their identities. Similarly, Elizabeth advocates for her students once she is in majority White spaces. She expressed:

[T]aking the opportunities that are given to me, where I have that seat at the table to say some stuff that I know my students don't have the patience to say, but I do,

because I'm committed to education. And using that then as a forum to spark hopefully transformational change.

However, when other participants confronted the White individuals and did not conform to the White individuals' preconceived expectations, they became suspect or were uninvited into the majority White spaces (Luna, 2010). The multiracial/biracial women lost their seat at the table.

Specifically, Danielle stated:

I know I was invited to those spaces that other Black women weren't invited into. Again I don't know if that's a sheer result of we only need one person from your office and it's you because the director is busy, or we want you because you're going to be easier to deal with. I think initially absolutely it was because of that based on assumptions of who I am and how I presented myself and how I showed up in the rooms. Then eventually when I became a little bit more vocal I stopped getting as many invites as I initially did. . . . I just don't think that they expect me to show up in those rooms and say those things at all. Had they, I don't think I would have been invited in the first place.

In addition to leveraging their identities as multi/biracial women to dismantle systemic oppression, the participants employ various strategies to survive racialized experiences in their workplace.

Navigating the System: Coping Strategies

The multi/biracial women in this study employ several coping strategies to navigate systems of oppression within higher education. The coping strategies include passing as White, psychological flexibility, performing, and remaining authentic.

Passing Whiteness

One participant, Elizabeth, who identifies as Asian and White, uses her phenotype to “situationally pass as White” (Khanna & Johnson, 2010, p. 382) when the emotional burden of White comfortability or monoracism becomes too much. Although Elizabeth does not identify as White, she commented that others sometimes perceive her as White based on how she changes her physical appearance. To avoid emotionally taxing conversations with monoracial and White

individuals, Elizabeth will manipulate her phenotype (Khanna & Johnson, 2010) by changing her clothes or hair color to downplay her identity as a woman of color. Elizabeth explained:

The other benefit to me is honestly that in some situations I pass. . . . I solicit gifts from high value, high net families. We're talking 10 million or more net worth of people. I realistically dress differently sometimes when I have to go to those events, because it is easier. I don't have the emotional labor to have a conversation with someone, because every single person in that room is White, except two families.

She went on to comment:

Today I have on a jacket. It's a Chinese jacket. I would not wear that sometimes to that event, just because I don't have the energy to have a conversation with someone, because in that space, they're often looking for people of color to target to feel like they have done, my perception at least, that they've done their good deed of hearing from someone else's perspective. I don't always want to be that person for them.

To avoid racialized conversations with others that can have a deep emotional impact, Elizabeth will “downplay cultural symbols”, such as her Chinese jacket, or manipulate her phenotype by changing her hair color so she is able to conceal aspects of her identity as a woman of color (Khanna & Johnson, 2010, p. 381). Several participants use their biraciality to understand and address complex situations.

Psychological Flexibility

Three participants stated that their identities as multi/biracial women give them flexibility in how they understand, “approach and respond” to complex issues in their workplace. Bryant explained, “I think being multiracial, there's something about that that you just inherently look at situations from more than one perspective. . . . [My identity] gives me a lot of [mental] flexibility that I think sometimes people who are monoracial might not have.” She further commented:

I've talked to other friends of mine who are also—or trainees I've worked with or coworkers or whatever who are also biracial, and that experience of being able to see issues from multiple perspectives, not just issues related to race, but just issues generally, kind of how you see the world. I do think there's a unique perspective

that gets—I don't know, that gets fostered from having a multiracial identity where you just have a little bit more psychological flexibility in how you approach and respond to situations and issues.

Veronica stated that her identities as a biracial woman often make her stop “to look at the context of what's going on.” She is mindful of taking a step back from a situation to examine issues under the surface. She commented, “[b]ut I also think that that's because [biracial women] come from backgrounds where we're taught very early on that everything is connected, everything has a purpose. And, we just kind of carry that with us.” When asked to provide an example of how she believes her identities as a biracial woman provide her with psychological flexibility, Daphne described an experience in which she was advocating for students of color who fall outside of the Black/White binary. Daphne, who identifies as Black and Filipino-American, expressed:

To be embodied in both of those identities at one time, I think has definitely influenced my seat at the table, if you will. . . . I will either use, especially when folks are focusing on the Black/White binary, in terms of advocacy for students, I generally will be the person at the table that'll be like, “Okay, what about our Latinx students, or how does this affect Asian-American students?”

Bryant, Veronica, and Daphne believe their identities as biracial women give them psychological flexibility to recognize and understand multiple perspectives. They use this ability to advocate for their students and advance social justice on their campuses. In addition to psychological flexibility, Daphne and several other participants perform in their roles.

Performing

Several participants engage in behavior to make themselves appear less threatening to other White administrators. While it may take various forms, the participants described the behavior as “performing” or wearing a “mask.” The multiracial and biracial women employ the mechanisms in majority White spaces and/or with White individuals to perpetuate White comfortability and to navigate or survive racialized situations. For Angie, performing is an

internal dialogue about whether she should remain silent in majority White spaces. She explained:

I think [I need to perform] mostly in those [White] spaces. In those other spaces that predominately the spaces that I am in. I think . . . when I say perform, it's from this internal dialogue about the balancing act. "Is it appropriate for me to name my own experience or name my own identity here, in this work context? Is this a professional setting for that or is it even relevant?" And I think that internal dialogue feels like a performance. Because then I have to respond to that and act accordingly. Whereas in . . . an all [people of color] space for example, I don't have to weigh all those options before speaking first.

She went on to comment:

I feel that there are times where, many times where I will stay silent. I will then later, go to my folks on campus who I can process with and process. But, in the actual space where I can influence, I feel I miss that opportunity. I miss mark.

Similarly, when describing her interactions with her colleagues in majority White spaces, Karen, who identifies as Black and White, noted:

[W]ith this new role as [a senior administrator], I'm sitting at tables—I mean, I have the provost's cellphone number, right, and the provost calls me. I have access to power, but in a way that still has to be pleasing to the institution and sometimes uphold systems of Whiteness.

Additionally, Karen describes performing as playing the "good Negro" or "code-switch[ing]" and acknowledged that she code-switches in her job. Similar to performing, code-switching refers to speech or behavior employed by people of color that make them appear less threatening to Whites (Hall, Everett & Hamilton-Mason, 2012). When asked to provide an example of a good Negro, Karen stated:

I think those are the folks who, at institutions that are like, "we care about diversity and we check our diversity boxes," they have some folks [of color] who will say, "well that was a good try" when something happens, right? Or, you know, "we've got X amount of students of color on campus so we're doing the things that we're supposed to do" instead of asking critical questions. . . . So, the people who are the good Negroes will say, "well good job on having the most diverse class" but never ask additional questions.

She went on to comment:

I sat at the table and I just thought, I'm not going to say anything and I'm not going to speak up in this space because it's not going to be accepted by anyone here. . . . [D]o I be the good Negro because, also there are limited people of color in this conversation, and just say, okay, and appease them, or do I push and challenge and say this is not okay?

Although Karen is a senior administrator, she still feels the need to perform for her White colleagues and administrators by acting in a manner that appears less threatening to her White colleague and that perpetuates White comfortability (i.e., not challenging the status quo).

Similarly, Daphne performs in her role. She described how her professional persona is different from her personal persona. She expressed:

[Daphne] in the streets is different than [Daphne] who signed up to do [diversity] work. [Daphne] in the streets, when I have patience to talk to you with all of the poise in the world, [Daphne] in the streets might yell at you, [Daphne] in the streets might walk away from you when offend her. [Daphne] who is signed up for social justice education and signed up to be an educator in this institution, means that I'm going to come prepared, I'm going to think about how I'm getting my point across, I'm going to think about how it might be landing on you. I might acknowledge that and hold space for you—very intentional spaces.

Daphne employs specific behavior when she is navigating her work environment that some Whites may perceive as less threatening and more accepting. Danielle stated that she also performs a balancing act between monoracial and White spaces. She commented, “I think [being a biracial woman is] just a daily balance of a back and forth between worlds, if you will.” She employs the “balanc[ing]” act to survive in the various spaces that she must navigate to be effective in her role. Rebecca stated that she sometimes feels that she is wearing a “mask” at work. Due to the microaggressions she experiences because of her identities, Rebecca feels that she must “brace” herself while at work. She described this phenomenon as wearing a mask and commented:

I had to kind of . . . brace myself because I'm always stopped, “you look so beautiful, you're so exotic, this is why you're such a good fit, you support our brown students” . . . it's a lot of emotional energy and work I have to do to mask my reactions.

Rebecca went on to explain:

So, I have to brace myself and I've had to practice schooling my face and my behavior and my tone, especially because in terms of diversity work and showing up as someone who is a diversity educator.

Similar to Karen and Daphne, Rebecca employs specific behavior to navigate the microaggressions she experiences in her workplace. Several multi/biracial women in this study behave in a manner that is less threatening to White administrators (i.e., remaining silent, schooling their features, not challenging the status quo). The women describe this phenomenon as performing or code-switching and often employ these strategies to navigate White spaces in their workplaces. In addition to performing, several participants choose to remain authentic to their identities as multi/biracial women to navigate systems of oppression within higher education.

Remaining Authentic

Several participants stated that they try to remain authentic to themselves as multi/biracial women in their workplaces to be effective higher education administrators. While different for each multi/biracial woman, all the participants practiced authenticity in some way. It is important for Karen to “show up” authentically in her workplace so that she can successfully fulfill her role. She commented:

I have to show up in the ways that I feel personally and morally obligated to show up to actually affect change on campus and to create safer spaces for my students, I also need to show up authentically and challenge and push. . . . For me, it is speaking to my morals and values, even when my own capital is threatened. For me, it is learning to be vulnerable and learning to show that vulnerability and saying I don't have to be perfect. It is embracing myself and saying, “you actually are enough.”

Regardless of the microaggressions that she experiences, Sarah tries to remain true to her identities as a Black and Japanese woman. She expressed:

I have made a vow to myself to be true to myself, and I'm going to try to break that down. It's a little complicated, but I want to allow all of my selves to coexist, and we're all a complex mix of all kinds of messed up stuff, some of which belong in the workplace, and some of which do not. Those that belong in the workplace, I want to give them space to be there. . . . [For example] I have. . . decided that in terms of the uber professionalism that we're expected to display, I know a lot of people of color . . . never let a hint of their personal lives intrude into their professional lives, and I've decided that I'm not going to make that sacrifice.

Realizing that her White colleagues assume, based on stereotypes about women of color, that she is being combative regardless of how she tries to approach them about her concerns, Veronica decided to be authentic to herself by openly confronting acts of monoracism and other forms of discrimination when they occur. Veronica explained:

I tell them straight out, I already know you think that, so I'm not gonna hold it back. I think I'm just at a point in my career and in my life of no matter what I do, you're going to think that me with my unicorn coffee cup is coming at you sideways, so you know what, I might as well do it.

Similarly, Bryant is open about her identities as a biracial woman and stated that she often tells other people about her mixed-racial heritage before they have the opportunity to ask. She's proud of her biraciality and uses her agency to assert her racialized identity. She commented:

I would. . . be more proactive about just putting it out there so that I don't have to deal with the questions . . . I will try and find ways to work into the conversation that I am biracial, that I'm half Asian, half White, so that I don't have to answer a bunch of questions about, are you Filipino, are you this, are you that.

In addition to remaining authentic, all of the participants described self-care, close collegial relationships, and allies as important strategies. The next section explores allyship.

Relationships with Allies

Consistent with literature on the experiences of monoracial women of color (Martinez et al., 2015), the participants discussed the importance of allies within their workplace. The

multiracial and biracial women in the study use allies to advance their social justice agendas, to gather feedback and support. Some participants discovered allies in unexpected people while other participants found allies in individuals, such as colleagues and/or communities of color, with similar racialized experiences.

Unexpected Allies. Through their work, the participants discovered allies in unexpected people both within and outside of higher education. The participants described being surprised by these relationships as the unexpected allies have different social identities than multiracial and biracial women. For example, several participants discovered allies in their White male colleagues and supervisors. The White males created space within their conversations and their work with the participants to discuss the saliency of race. The men created opportunities to learn about the multi/biracial women, how the participants' race impact the way these women approach their work, and how the participants use their past racialized experiences to inform their work. The White male allies created space for the multiracial and biracial women to be authentic in the workplace by discussing race in their day-to-day operations. Veronica, who identifies as Afro-Latinx, stated:

[I]t was really interesting because my White, straight, cisgender males who were my supervisors and my colleagues and my co-hall directors and people that I was working with and doing cases were probably my biggest supports, were totally real with me, totally honest with me. We were able to talk to each other, and this idea of this person in power who trumps all this, anything that I had gone through, would tell me no, honey, yeah this was your fault, but this wasn't, get your life together. It was just really interesting because that's the people that I had bonded with the best in any part of my career from entry level until now.

Angie, who identifies as Asian and White, was surprised to discover an ally in her White, cisgender, male supervisor. She expressed:

[M]y position as an Assistant Director was actually a bit more welcoming when it comes to having space to be more authentic in who I was as a multiracial woman. I think a large part of that was due to my supervisory relationship which, really surprisingly, was a White man. I think I would not have expected that. . . . [My

supervisor] was really wonderful and often provided space in our one-on-one and also just in the work that we did. . . . I think we both recognized the importance of learning about each other, where we are coming from, basing our relationship off of our experiences. . . . In that sense, I had a very positive experience as a multiracial woman in that workspace. . . . I always felt it was okay to bring [race] up. Or even when I was having a really hard time with something that might be going on, I could just stop. It was always an open door. I could just come in, sit down, just talk about it. It was really meaningful for me.

One participant, Sarah, found unexpected allies in White women. The White women were senior leaders who worked in the private sector, and while their racialized experiences differed from Sarah's, they were empathetic of her circumstances and were able to provide insight and advice that Sarah found useful. Sarah commented:

In my particular situation both of these women are White women, which has been kind of interesting, so the thing that is helpful of course is being intelligent as they are. They know their own limitations when it comes to talking about issues that deal specifically with racial identity and will tell me what they think always with that caveat of, "I don't have that experience. I don't have that background, but here's what I think," so they can speak from their industrial knowledge without placing themselves into that positionality, which can be often very helpful as well.

Several participants found allies in colleagues and supervisors who, despite their different racial identities, had a deep understanding of and appreciation for the racialized experiences and identities of the participants. Additionally, most participants found allies in expected individuals or communities (i.e., individuals of color) both inside and outside higher education.

Expected Allies. All the participants find support and kinship with both monoracial and multi/biracial individuals of color. The allies of color perceive the participants as women of color and therefore embrace them as a part of the monoracial community. The allies are peers and faculty on their campus as well as colleagues from other institutions. Danielle, who identifies as African and White, explained that she and her group of monoracial women allies called "Black Girls Rock" would meet for "lunch and dinner on a monthly basis if not more often, and [they] would talk about all the stuff [they] had to deal with, the microaggressions, and

the institutional policies that [they] noticed held people back.” Similarly, Angie expressed how different her experiences are with people of color versus White individuals on her campus. With people of color, Angie is able to process her feelings while at work if she feels that she is “in a very harmful environment or someone is not understanding where [I’m] coming from because of the different identities they hold.” She went on to comment, “in the other conversation[s] I hold [with other individuals of color], I feel that I am whole.” The participants are willing to seek-out or create these communities within their workplace. Depending on the size and mission of the institution, some participants receive more support than others. As the participants anticipated, the multi/biracial women were able to find stronger allies in institutions with deeper commitments to social justice. The participants expressed the significance of allyship with communities of color for their identity as women of color. Being embraced by monoracial communities is important for their wellbeing and growth as professionals. Elizabeth, who identifies as Chinese and White, commented:

Most people I know, especially those I work with who are people of color, I get to be embraced as a person of color, which I think is a really open community that they take me as their own, which is such a gift. . . . I think it's really important for me as a biracial woman to know that.

Danielle stated:

I'm going to get the most support from communities of color. . . . I'm also going to be successful based on the folks who look out for me. Those are typically again mentors who are people of color or people who understand that my experiences in dealing with power, privilege, oppression, are real and valid and not something that they think I made up.

However, even in spaces with allies of color, some participants still feel the need to prove their authenticity and to explain that they experience oppression and racism as biracial women. Danielle expressed that she sometimes feels the need to explain to her monoracial supervisor of color that her “situation [is] unique and not unique at the same time.” Danielle stated that she

must “explain to people of color that. . . [she] experience[s] some of the same oppression that [they] do. . . but that it might look different.” The outsider status that Danielle experiences is a monoracial microaggression that is consistent with the experiences of multiracial and biracial students (Harris, 2017a). Elizabeth also expressed the importance of understanding that her experiences as a woman of color are unique because of her mixed heritage. She is deeply aware of the significance of monoracial spaces that allow monoracial communities of color to caucus. Elizabeth believes that because she is biracial, she should not always be present in these spaces. Elizabeth stated:

I also know my experiences [as a biracial woman] are wildly different. I try to honor that when [monoracial colleagues of color] share or when they tell stories, when they have a seat at the table, I know that I am not in the same place that they are. I think it's really important for me as a biracial woman to know that and to know. . . I do identify as a person of color, but that doesn't mean I should always get a seat at the table with the people of color, because sometimes they need to have conversations where that space should be for them.

In addition to allies, the participants described positive interactions with their colleagues, students, and faculty, which the women attribute to the stakeholders' understanding of race and gender. Overall, the participants were able to share their identities as multi/biracial women with their students, serve as mentors and advisors, and use their identities to advocate for students and their families.

Several women in the study employ various coping strategies to navigate systems of oppression within higher education. The mechanisms, such as performing and remaining authentic, are a few strategies that the participants identified in their interviews. Overall, the participants shared that navigating systems within higher education is a daily challenge that requires them to critically examine their identities as multi/biracial women of color and the systems in which they work.

Chapter Summary

The emerging themes underscore the significance of race and gender to one's experiences in the workplace. The multi/biracial women participating in this study encountered multiple racialized experiences based on their mixed-racial heritage, phenotype, and gender. The emerging themes were saliency race, experiences with race and racism, expectations, the impact of racism on the participants, challenging systems of oppression, and coping strategies. Furthermore, the findings illuminate the singularity of the participants' identities and reinforce the premise that multi/biracial women cannot be essentialized into a monoracial narrative, nor are their experiences critically different from monoracial women of color. Due to White supremacy, social ideologies, and hierarchies of race, multiracial and biracial women in higher education are viewed as women of color and other. Thus, these women shared similar racialized experiences with monoracial women of color, experiencing microaggressions and monoracism singular to multiracial/biracial individuals. The participants described instances in which administrators used the multi/biracial women for their benefit and shared experiences whereby they were sexualized and objectified. They spoke about the exhaustion and anxiety they experienced working in majority White spaces. The multi/biracial women shared stories about the uncertainty they experienced working with White administrators and their insecurity with an ability to challenge the status quo. They described their survival coping strategies and allies. Depending on their phenotype, racial heritage, and cultural upbringing, the participants viewed themselves as women of color and other, although they identify as multi/biracial; they embraced multiple identities as racialized women. They found a balance navigating between monoracial communities and the White majority. The next chapter discusses the implications of these findings as well as provides recommendations for inclusive practice and future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

I approached this study through a transformative paradigm (Creswell, 2014; Guido, Chavez & Lincoln, 2010; Mertens, 2010; Romm, 2014) using phenomenology (Smith, 2013; Van Manen, 2016) and Critical Race Feminism (CRF; Wing, 2003) as lenses to explore the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions in higher education. The study focused on the unique perspectives of the women and aimed to understand their workplace encounters through their personal narratives. Through the participants' stories, the multi/biracial women shared their various experiences within their workplaces. The broad workplace experiences have far-reaching implications for higher education administrators who seek to understand and support all multi/biracial women in their institutions.

Saliency and Intersectionality of Race and Gender

Consistent with literature on monoracial women of color and multi/biracial individuals, race and gender influenced how the multiracial and biracial women in this study experience interpersonal interactions in higher education (Britton, 2013; Diehl, 2014; Harris, 2017a, 2017c; Hill et al., 2016; Kellogg & Liddell, 2012; Nixon, 2016). As noted in CRF (Mizelle & Berry, 2006), the participants' race and gender were inextricably linked and central to their identities as individuals. Throughout the interviews, all of the participants discussed the saliency and the intersectionality of their race and gender in the workplace. Similar to Remedios and Snyder's (2015) findings on monoracial women of color, the participants in this study stated that the

saliency of their race and gender was influenced by specific interpersonal interactions and/or space (i.e., majority White spaces versus majority people of color space). The participants were more aware of their identities as multi/biracial women in majority White spaces or when interacting with individuals with limited understandings of race and gender. Additionally, the current racial and sociopolitical climate in the United States was especially significant to the saliency of the participants' race. Because of the recent acts of violence perpetrated against communities of color and the current rise of White supremacy on college campuses (Jaschik, 2017; Kerr, 2018; Quintana, 2017; Stripling, 2017), race plays a significant role in shaping campus climates. Campus and sociopolitical climates influenced the way other administrators, students, and faculty interact with the participants as racialized women. For example, the constituents made assumptions about the participants based on racial stereotypes.

The participants viewed themselves as both monoracial and multiracial women of color. When describing or referring to themselves, some participants used monoracial identifiers, such as Black, as well as multi/biracial identifiers, such as Afro-Latinx, interchangeably. Some participants stated that, because of their phenotype, they identify as monoracial and multiracial simultaneously. Several participants viewed themselves as women of color, monoracial, and multiracial. However, it is important to note that all of the participants identified as women of color and multiracial. Additionally, the participants' positionality within the university affected the saliency of their race and gender.

Similar to the findings on monoracial women of color in chief diversity officer positions (Nixon, 2016) and African-American college and university presidents (Parker, 2002; Waring, 2003), several participants in this study were keenly aware of the intersectionality of their race and gender due to their positions. The participants serve in highly visible roles on their college

campuses, and as one of few multi/biracial women administrators on their campuses, the participants stated that they felt they garnered more attention, which influenced the saliency of their identities in the workplace. The intersectionality of the women's characteristics (i.e., multiraciality, gender, and phenotype) with their position/visibility, and the racialized and gendered interactions with their constituents because of their identities, caused the participants to scrutinize how they dressed and how they communicated with their peers, students, and others.

As noted in CRF (Mizelle & Berry, 2006), the intersectionality and saliency of race and gender was especially significant for the women in this study. It impacted their interpersonal interactions with their colleagues, students, faculty, and other higher education administrators. For example, other administrators made assumptions about the participants' abilities and interests based on preconceived ideologies about women of color (i.e., racial stereotypes). Therefore, the participants felt the need to employ strategies, such as performing, to navigate the interpersonal interactions in the workplace. The participants' identities as multi/biracial women also influenced other racialized and gendered experiences.

Experiences with Race, Racism, and Sexism

Due to systems of oppression within higher education, White supremacy, hierarchies of race and gender, and internalized racism and sexism, the multi/biracial women in this study had similar racialized and gendered experiences as monoracial women of color in higher education and multi/biracial college students, campus professionals, and women in clinical settings. Some of the similarities include the saliency and intersectionality of race and gender, experiences with racism and sexism, significant impact on the participants' emotional well-being, and the necessity to employ mechanisms to navigate systems of oppression in higher education. Additionally, the participants experienced unique interactions based on their identities as

multi/biracial women such as horizontal and vertical oppression perpetrated by monoracial individuals of color and White individuals. For example, the participants experienced sexism, (mono)racism (i.e., assumptions about their behavior based on racial stereotypes) and monoracism (i.e., questioned authenticity) because of how other people perceived and responded to their phenotype, gender, and race. This is a unique form of discrimination based on the intersectionality of their gender and multiraciality—gendered-monoracism. Monoracial women of color experience a “double bind”—discrimination due to their identities as racialized women (hooks, 2015, p. 3). However, gendered-monoracism explores the notion that multi/biracial women experience a triple bind—discrimination based on their multiplicative identities (i.e., gender, race, and mixed-race heritage). To help clarify the findings, the following sections are separated by monoracial and multiracial experiences, which highlights the similarities between the findings and the literature on monoracial women of color and multiracial individuals. To explicate the similarities between the findings and the literature further, the overarching sections (i.e., monoracial and multiracial experiences) are organized into sub-sections based on the similarities between the impact on the participants’ emotional well-being, coping strategies, and existing literature. However, it is important to note that these findings explicate the core tenets of CRF and add to the growing body of literature on multi/biracial women administrators in higher education.

Monoracial experiences. The findings illuminate the racism and sexism multiracial and biracial women in this study experienced, which are consistent with literature on the experiences of monoracial women of color (Britton, 2013; Hill et al., 2016; Mendenhall, Harwood, & Browne Hunt, 2016). For example, the multi/biracial women described experiences in which colleagues and other administrators made assumptions about their behavior based on racial

stereotypes (i.e., angry Black woman, Earth mother, docile). Additionally, the participants described instances of objectification and capitalization, which are not singular to multi/biracial women in higher education (Berdhal & Moore, 2006; Museus et al., 2015; Nadal et al., 2011; Rockquemore & Brunsma, 2004). Consistent with findings on African-American women who serve in chief diversity officer positions (Nixon, 2016), several participants felt isolated due to their positions as senior administrators and their identities as biracial women. Similar to monoracial women of color (Duncan, 2014; Lutz, Hassouneh, Akeroyd, & Beckett, 2013), the experiences had a significant impact on the participants' overall well-being.

Impact on well-being. The racialized and gendered incidents that the multi/biracial women experience in the workplace had a substantial effect on their self-perception, emotional well-being, and relationships with peers, students, and other administrators that are similar to monoracial women of color. As noted in CRF (Cleaver, 2003; Crenshaw, 2003) and supported by previous literature on monoracial women of color (Nixon, 2016; Parker, 2002; Waring, 2003), the impact of the discrimination on the participants' was unique to them as women of color and cannot be essentialized into the narrative on the collective impact of gender discrimination (i.e., White women and women of color; Remedios & Snyder, 2015). Consistent with Nixon's (2016) findings on monoracial women of color in chief diversity positions and Duncan's (2014) findings on women of color in the academy, the women in this study assumed additional responsibility for advancing social justice on their college campuses due to external expectations and internal responsibility. Similar to monoracial women of color (Lutz, Hassouneh, Akeroyd, & Beckett, 2013), the systemic oppression inherent within the campus environment, daily operations, and consistently present in interpersonal interactions required the participants to employ additional strategies to navigate their workplace, which resulted in feelings of exhaustion, tension, and

anxiety. The other effects of discrimination, such as the participants' feelings of frustration, distress, and self-doubt, are consistent with previous literature about the experiences of monoracial women of color (Berdhal & Moore, 2006; Lutz, Hassouneh, Akeroyd, & Beckett, 2013; Nixon, 2016; Remedio & Snyder, 2015). Similar to African-American women, the multi/biracial participants were sensitive about how they present themselves or show-up at work due to racial stereotypes about women of color (Nixon, 2016; Parker, 2002; Waring, 2003). Because of the racialized and gendered discrimination that they experienced, the women in this study were conscious of their professional attire, how they communicated, how they interacted with their constituents, and how other individuals interpreted the participants' behavior. The participants employed several strategies to navigate systemic oppression in their workplaces that are similar to monoracial women of color.

Coping strategies. Similar to monoracial women of color (Bell & Nkomo, 1998, 1999; Holder, Jackson & Ponterotto, 2015; Luna et al., 2010; Nixon, 2016; Seo & Hinton, 2009; Waring, 2003), the participants in the study used various strategies to navigate and challenge systemic oppression within the workplace. Several examples include performing, leveraging their identities, establishing allies, and self-care. Consistent with Nixon's (2016) study of African-American women chief diversity officers, several participants performed by modulating their behavior or speech when working in majority White spaces to appear less threatening to White administrators. In contrast, several participants chose to remain authentic to their identities as multi/biracial women regardless of how their White peers perceived them. Depending on their racial heritage, phenotype, and position, the multi/biracial women in this study leveraged their identities to access majority White spaces so that they could advance social justice. All the participants established allies with other colleagues and administrators. In

addition, the participants employed self-care strategies, such as counseling, mentoring, and professional development as mechanisms to navigate and dismantle systemic oppression. The participants in this study also experienced monoracism and multiracial microaggressions (Harris, 2016; 2017a, 2017b, 2017c) that are similar to multi/biracial students, campus professionals, and women in therapeutic settings.

Multiracial experiences. The participants experienced unique forms of racism that are singular to multi/biracial individuals such as outsider status/questioned authenticity (Harris, 2017a) and White comfortability. The findings are consistent with literature on the experiences of multi/biracial college students, campus professionals, and women in therapeutic settings (Harris, 2017a; Harris, 2017c; Hyman, 2010; Kellogg & Liddell, 2012; Museus et al., 2015; Nadal et al., 2011). As noted by anti-essentialism and multiplicative identity, two core tenets of CRF (Wing, 2003), the women in this study experienced a unique form of racism (monoracism and multiracial microaggressions) perpetrated by monoracial individuals of color and White colleagues. Due to internalized racism, monoracial individuals of color perpetrated horizontal oppression by “othering” or excluding the participants as non-members of a monoracial group. This is consistent with the findings by Harris (2017a, 2017c) and Nadal et al. (2011) concerning the experiences of multi/biracial college students and multi/biracial campus professionals. Similar to multi/biracial college students and women in therapeutic settings (Harris, 2017a, 2017b; Hyman, 2010), the participants also described instances in which colleagues and other administrators objectified and capitalized on their identities. For example, several participants shared stories in which monoracial individuals of color and/or White individuals used the participants to gain a benefit for the university (i.e., financial). The participants also described instances in which their monoracial and White constituents commented on the physical

appearance and phenotype. Additionally, the participants in this study described experiences in which White individuals challenged their authenticity as legitimate members of a monoracial group and/or viewed the multi/biracial women as outsiders or non-members. Similar to monoracial individuals of color, White administrators perpetuated White supremacy by upholding hierarchies of race (i.e., buying into and perpetuating racial stereotypes about women of color) while simultaneously perpetrating monoracism against the multi/biracial women (i.e., excluding the participants as non-members of a monoracial group). Additionally, White individuals perpetrated multiracial microaggressions/monoracism based on the participants' unique racial heritage, gender, and phenotype (i.e., White comfortability). They used the women to benefit their interests, assuage their White guilt, affirm their motives and behavior, and/or to maintain the status quo. While outsider status/questioned authenticity (Harris, 2017a) perpetrated by monoracial communities of color and/or White individuals is a form of monoracism experienced by some multi/biracial individuals, the participants in this study described experiences in which White individuals questioned their authenticity as legitimate members of a monoracial group while simultaneously perpetrating sexism, (mono)racism, and multiracial microaggressions. One example is White comfortability.

White comfortability. The participants described instances in which White individuals intentionally sought them out to maintain the White individual's racial comfort due to White fragility (DiAngelo, 2011). White fragility is a state of stress caused by racial tension or discomfort that "triggers a range of defens[ive] moves" to "reinstate [W]hite racial equilibrium" (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 57). One such response is constructing "insulated environment[s] of racial privilege" by avoiding racially charged situations or encounters (DiAngelo, 2011, p. 55). White administrators believed the participants were less threatening and therefore felt more comfortable

interacting with them. It is also important to note that the White individuals intentionally sought out multi/biracial women instead of multi/biracial men. The participants' gender further reinforced the White individual's comfort as women are assumed to be less threatening than men (i.e., stereotypical traits such as nurturing, kind; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Sanchez-Hucles & Davis, 2010). For example, one of the participants described how surprised some of her White colleagues were when she was assertive because they assumed that, because she is an Asian and White woman, she would be docile. By intentionally interacting with the multiracial and biracial women in this study and avoiding monoracial women of color and multi/biracial men, White individuals insulated themselves and therefore maintained their White comfort. White comfortability is not a phenomenon that is only experienced by multi/biracial women, however, when taken into consideration with the intersectionality of gender, (mono)racism, and monoracism, White comfortability is an experience that is unique to the multi/biracial women in this study. Overall, the racist and sexist experiences had a significant impact on the participants' well-being.

Impact on well-being. The effects of gendered-monoracism, such as the participants' feelings of anger, discomfort, exclusion, and isolation, are consistent with findings on the experiences of multi/biracial college students, campus professionals, and women in therapeutic settings (Harris, 2017c; Hyman, 2010; Nadal et al., 2011; Museus et al., 2015). The multi/biracial women also felt a unique form of insecurity because of the horizontal oppression perpetrated by monoracial individuals of color and vertical oppression perpetrated by White administrators. Due to internalized racism and sexism, some participants in this study questioned their own authenticity as legitimate members of monoracial groups, questioned their abilities to effectively support their students and colleagues due to their mixed-racial heritage,

felt the need to prove their authenticity as members of a monoracial group, and questioned if they perpetuate White supremacy. Several participants questioned if they should participate or speak up in certain spaces because of internalized monoracism and sexism. Additionally, unlike monoracial women of color, the multi/biracial women carried the additional burden of navigating between monoracial spaces of color and White spaces. The bicultural existence had an impact at the superficial and deeply emotional level (Lutz et al., 2013). Overall, the impact of gendered-monoracism explicates the CRF notion of anti-essentialism, as the effects of the discrimination are unique to the participants (Wing, 2003). The multi/biracial women in this study employed various coping strategies to navigate systemic oppression in their workplaces.

Coping strategies. The women in this study employed similar strategies as multi/biracial college students, campus professionals, and women in therapeutic settings to navigate and survive gendered-monoracism in the workplace (Harris, 2017c; Hyman, 2010; Museus et al., 2015). Some strategies include seeking support, confronting the act of discrimination, educating others, and avoiding stressful racialized encounters (Museus et al., 2015). One participant used a strategy – passing – that is unique to people of color with more Anglo features. Elizabeth manipulated her phenotype as a coping mechanism to avoid racially stressful encounters in the workplace. By changing her physical appearance, Elizabeth was able to downplay her attributes as a woman of color and therefore, was able to avoid questions or comments about her mixed-race heritage. Additionally, the participants used their psychological flexibility that they believe results from their mixed-race backgrounds to understand, approach, and respond to complex issues in their workplace. The findings have great implications for higher education administrators who seek to recruit, retain, promote, and support multiracial and biracial women administrators.

Implications and Considerations for Practice

The findings reveal several key areas that would be beneficial in improving higher education administration and supporting multiracial and biracial women in the academy. Specific recommendations include education for both monoracial administrators of color and White administrators, support mechanisms for multi/biracial women in administrative positions, recruitment and retention strategies, and professional development for multi/biracial women in higher education administration.

Education for Higher Education Administrators

Race and gender are highly complex social constructs and aspects of identity that can shift over the course of a lifetime. As a result, all higher education administrators should continue to educate themselves on the complexity and intersectionality of race, gender, and discrimination within the academy. Monoracial administrators of color and White administrators must acknowledge that gendered-monoracism and systemic oppression exists within higher education, seek to understand how they perpetuate oppression in the workplace, listen attentively and authentically to multi/biracial women, form authentic allyship, and dismantle systems of oppression. White administrators and men must acknowledge their personal privilege, and monoracial administrators of color must be aware of horizontal oppression directed at multi/biracial individuals due to internalized racism. All individuals have implicit bias that influences interpersonal interactions. Therefore, everyone should be aware of implicit bias, and how bias manifests in the various structures within a university (i.e., governance, finance). All administrators should utilize best practice that teaches on the source of implicit bias and how to mitigate bias in the workplace. They should seek to understand how systemic oppression manifests within specific communities of color, and how oppression affects communities of

color differently. Monoracial people of color should continue to educate themselves on how White supremacy perpetrates horizontal oppression directed toward multiracial people, even among monoracial people of color. For example, monoracial administrators of color should read and incorporate existing research on monoracism and multiraciality into daily practice. Higher education administrators should continue to encourage, support, and reward research on multiraciality, monoracism, and gender. Additionally, administrators should incorporate the research into existing curriculum and general education requirements. Lastly, communities of color and White administrators should identify how to support various sub-populations of color within the larger community (i.e., multiracial/biracial individuals).

Support Mechanisms

Systemic oppression within higher education has a deep emotional impact on the well-being of multiracial women of color administrators. Consistent with the core tenets of CRF (Cleaver 2003; Crenshaw, 2003), the findings illuminate the notion that while discrimination exists for all women of color, the impact is not interchangeable (Harris, 2016). The constant racialized and gendered experiences required participants to expend additional energy and effort to navigate their day-to-day responsibilities. As a result, administrators should create and promote support mechanisms, such as mentorship programs, that help the participants cope with the discrimination they experience in the workplace. Administrators should provide interventions through faculty and staff assistance programs that provide counseling and self-healing strategies that empower multi/biracial women, and the release time/mental health days to utilize the interventions. For example, administrators must understand and acknowledge that the current sociopolitical climate and recent racialized events that have occurred on college campuses impacts staff of color collectively and individually. Therefore, administrators should

work with faculty and staff of color to create opportunities for staff of color to caucus around shared experience. Additionally, administrators should facilitate conversations and construct environments in which multi/biracial women and other administrators can discuss the intersection and significance of gender, multiraciality, and discrimination in the workplace and how the intersectionality affects multi/biracial women. “Centering [m]ultiraciality in higher education conversations begins to destabilize” gendered-monoracism within institutional policies and practices (Harris, 2017c, p. 1070). However, administrators should be aware that racialized and gendered conversations can be emotionally draining for the women. Lastly, faculty, staff, and administrators of color should recognize and embrace multi/biracial women as legitimate members of the monoracial community of color through authentic collegial relationships and allyship. Monoracial women of color and multi/biracial women should form a true sisterhood through shared experience and respect that is cemented in the understanding that the improvement in the professional status of multi/biracial women is the improvement for all women of color (hooks, 2015).

Recruitment, Retention Strategies and Professional Development

In addition to the implications listed above, higher education administrators should be sensitive to how they recruit, retain, and support professional development for multi/biracial women. The participants stated that they discovered stronger allies and better support at institutions with stronger commitments to diversity and inclusivity. Therefore, institutions of higher education should make a stronger commitment to diversity and equity through recruitment and retention strategies that target individuals of color, including multi/biracial women.

Recruitment and retention. When considering recruitment and retention, institutions of higher education should evaluate hiring practices, on-boarding processes, staff development

opportunities, and promotion/tenure principles and procedures for inherent bias and inequity (i.e., pay inequity, unjust evaluation practices). Campus climate plays a significant role in faculty and staff satisfaction and sense of belonging (Sabharwal & Corley, 2009).

Administrators should conduct cyclical campus climate assessments/surveys to gage the campus environment, and to identify effective strategies that improve inclusivity and equity.

Administrators should evaluate current institutional policies and practices using existing theory, such as Critical Race Feminism and MultiCrit, to identify areas of inequity (i.e., systemic race and gender hierarchies, Crenshaw, 2003; Harris, 2016). Once identified, administrators should create opportunities to co-construct knowledge and best practice with multi/biracial women—how the women’s race and gender impacts the way the women approach their work, and how the women use their past-racialized and gendered experiences to inform their work. Administrators should create space for the multiracial and biracial women to be authentic in the workplace by discussing their race and gender in their day-to-day operations, and senior administrators should dismantle systems, such as the “good old boy network,” that bar multi/biracial women and monoracial women of color from senior leadership positions at the highest levels. As senior administrators dismantle systems that bar multi/biracial women’s professional growth and development, chief administrators support all women of color as monoracial women of color are often excluded from these networks/opportunities (Nixon, 2016). Additionally, multi/biracial women administrators should continue to leverage their identities to confront and disrupt gendered-monoracism, racism, and sexism so that all women of color may benefit. In addition to recruitment and retention strategies, campus administrators should carefully consider how they support professional development for multi/biracial women.

Professional development. Considering the rapidly growing number of multi/biracial women matriculating through higher education, administrators should conduct internal assessments to determine the demographics of their senior administration. Does senior leadership reflect the growing population? If not, administrators should create leadership development programs, such as executive mentoring, coaching or fellowships, within their campus communities that support the advancement and promotion of multi/biracial women. Additionally, they should promote and support external leadership development programs, conferences, and professional associations that target multi/biracial women and other women of color. Additionally, campus administrators should offer campus workshops and maintain a digital library with resources (e.g., reports, articles, digital recordings, webcasts) through the faculty and staff assistance program. The resources should target leadership development for multi/biracial women and monoracial women of color. Administrators should create reward structures for the additional service/labor, such as mentoring students of color, that multi/biracial women provide to the campus community. Lastly, higher education administrators should acknowledge and value the unique positionality of multi/biracial women and the qualities, abilities, and perspectives that these women bring to the table.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research plays a critical role in dismantling systems of oppression in higher education. As administrators seek to support the growing number of multiracial and biracial women matriculating through higher education, and to recruit, retain, and promote multi/biracial women administrators, it is important for scholars to remain committed to understanding multiraciality and gender. For example, scholars should continue to explore how the intersection of multiraciality and gender influences different forms of monoracism. By exploring the

differences in how multi/biracial men experience discrimination versus multi/biracial women through qualitative research, scholars could illuminate different types of systemic oppression, how the discrimination impacts each group, and support strategies to recruit and retain these individuals. Additionally, scholars should explore intragroup experiences. For example, researchers could explore how a multi/biracial woman's phenotype and/or mixed-race heritage influences her experiences in the workplace. Scholars should also develop and evaluate programs and interventions, such as implicit bias training, that educate monoracial individuals of color and White administrators on multiraciality, gender, and discrimination. For example, scholars should create programs that educate on horizontal and vertical oppression directed at multi/biracial women and develop recommendations/best practice that corrects gendered-monoracism. To better understand intersectionality, scholars should explore how other social identities, such as class, intersect with gendered-monoracism and influence the experiences of multi/biracial women administrators. Additionally, scholars should examine the intersection of White supremacy, the history of multiracial people in the U.S., and monoracism. For example, scholars could explore how White supremacy and the legacy of colonialism/imperialism in the United States perpetuates monoracism and gendered-monoracism. Lastly, scholars should explore the notion of gendered-monoracism by examining each of the findings separately.

Chapter Summary

Grounded in the CRF tenets of intersectionality of race and gender (Mizelle & Berry, 2006); unjust race and gender hierarchies (Johnson, 2003), anti-essentialism (Wing, 2003; Crenshaw, 2003), and positionality (Cleaver, 2003; Crenshaw, 2003), the findings illuminate the unique racialized and gendered experiences of multi/biracial women senior and mid-level administrators in higher education and underscore the multiplicity of their unique perspectives.

The women in this study experience sexism, (mono)racism (i.e., assumptions about their behavior) and monoracism (i.e., questioned authenticity) because of how other people perceive and respond to their phenotype, gender, and race. Others perceive the participants as racialized women (both monoracial and multi/biracial) and therefore perpetuate, (mono)racism, monoracism, and sexism against them. This is a unique form of discrimination based on the intersectionality of their gender and multiraciality—gendered-monoracism. The effects of gendered-monoracism have a significant impact on the participants' overall well-being and require the multiracial and biracial women to use various mechanisms and strategies to navigate the workplace. When examined through the CRF tenets of multiplicative identity (Wing, 2003), anti-essentialism (Wing, 2003), intersectionality of race and gender (Mizelle & Berry, 2006), and positionality (Cleaver, 2003; Crenshaw, 2003), it is apparent that multi/biracial women senior and mid-level administrators are essentialized into a monoracial narrative. Previous studies on multiracial individuals in higher education focus on multiraciality and monoracism broadly (see Harris 2017a, 2017b, 2017c; Nadal et al., 2011; Museus et al., 2015); however, the literature fails to examine the intersectionality of gender, race, and monoracism. This study highlights the need to continue to examine the intersectionality of multiraciality, monoracism, and gender. Through counter-story telling (Johnson, 2003; Wing, 2003), the participants created a new narrative as they shared their struggles and triumphs related to their identities in the workplace. They shed light on and helped to dismantle systemic oppression by openly exposing the difficulties they encounter, the deep emotions they feel due to their experiences, and their struggles to be the best higher education administrators for their campus communities as they can be. I am deeply humbled by their vulnerability and grateful for this experience. It is my hope that higher

education administrators use this research to dismantle systemic oppression within the academy and create more inclusive campus environments.

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APPENDIX A
GATEKEEPER EMAIL

Dear Administrator,

Hello! My name is Judith Pannell and I am a doctoral student at the University of Georgia. I am seeking participants for a research study that explores the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions in higher education. I am seeking participants who meet the following criteria:

- participants who identify as multiracial or biracial women,
- who have served in a senior or mid-level administrative positions within a U.S. institution of higher education,
- for at least one year.

The study consists of two interviews, either in-person, via telephone or electronically, ranging between 60 minutes and 90 minutes in length and an optional second interview. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to forward the following message to your constituent group. Your assistance is greatly appreciated. Please contact me directly at jpanne2@emory.edu if you have any questions about the study.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX B
EMAIL INVITATION

Dear Administrators,

Hello! My name is Judith Pannell and I am a doctoral student at the University of Georgia. You are receiving this email because you are a member of one of the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators' constituency groups. I am seeking participants for a research study that explores the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions in higher education.

I am seeking individuals who identify as multiracial or biracial women, who have served in senior or mid-level administrative positions within a U.S. institute of higher education for at least one year. The study consists of one interview, either in-person, via telephone or electronically, ranging between 60 minutes and 90 minutes in length and an optional second interview. During the interview, participants will describe their work-related experiences as a multiracial or biracial woman in their position.

Your engagement in this study is vital for all multiracial and biracial women serving in senior and mid-level administrative positions in higher education. If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact me directly at judith.pannell25@uga.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

APPENDIX C
FOLLOW-UP EMAIL

Dear Administrator,

Hello! My name is Judith Pannell and I am a doctoral student at the University of Georgia. I am seeking participants for a research study that explores the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior or mid-level administrative positions in higher education. I am seeking participants who meet the following criteria:

- participants who identify as multiracial or biracial women,
- who have served in senior or mid-level administrative positions within a U.S. institution of higher education,
- for at least one year.

The study consists of one interview, either in-person, via telephone or electronically, ranging between 60 minutes and 90 minutes in length and an optional second interview. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to forward the following message to your constituent group. Your assistance is greatly appreciated. Please contact me directly at judith.pannell25@uga.edu if you have any questions about the study.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographic

1. What leadership position do you currently hold in the institution? Please provide a brief job description.
2. How long have you served in your current role?
3. How do you racially identify and why?

Experiences

1. Think about the various work-related experiences you've had in the past. How have your identities as a multiracial/biracial woman influenced your experiences as a higher education senior/mid-level administrator?

Interactions

1. Think about your interactions with others (your supervisor, colleagues, staff, faculty, students, etc.).
2. How do you interact with your supervisor, colleagues, staff, faculty, and students while fulfilling your role?
3. How do your colleagues typically interact with you?
4. What is your perception of your interactions with others?
5. Does your identity as a multiracial/biracial woman influence the way you interact with your supervisor, colleagues, staff, faculty, and students? If so, how?
6. As you engage with others, what feelings do you experience?
7. Do you employ any strategies to engage with various constituents?

Navigating policy and practices

1. Think about current policy and practices that you believe impact the way you complete your job responsibilities due to your race and gender. How do you navigate policies/practices as a multiracial/biracial woman to be effective in your role?

APPENDIX E
CONSENT FORM

Researcher's Statement

I am asking you to take part in a research study to explore the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions in higher education. Before you decide to participate in the study, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. This form is designed to give you the information about the study, so you can decide whether to be in the study or not. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you need more information. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." A copy of the form will be given to you.

Principal Investigator: Christina Linder
Department of Counseling and Human Development
linder@uga.edu

Student Co-Investigator: Judith Pannell
judith.pannell25@uga.edu

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions in higher education.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to ...

- Participate in one interview (either face-to-face, Skype, or conference call) ranging between sixty minutes and ninety minutes in length. The interview will be audio recorded for data collection methods only. In the interview, you will be asked to describe your work related experiences as a multiracial/biracial woman in your leadership position within your institution. The questions will focus on participants' experiences, interactions with others, and strategies for success.
- Participate in a potential second interview (either face-to-face, Skype, or conference call). After analyzing the initial data, the researcher may contact you via email to participate in a second interview ranging between sixty minutes and ninety minutes in length. The interview will be audio recorded for data collection methods only and will focus on any lingering questions from the first interview. Participants can opt-out of the second interview by declining the investigator's invitation to participate in writing.

Risks and discomforts

Participants may experience feelings of discomfort, sadness, and/or stress.

Benefits

The researcher hopes to gain a better understanding of the experiences of multiracial and biracial women in senior and mid-level administrative positions in higher education to improve practice so that institutions can provide better resources and support to all multiracial and biracial women in higher education administration.

Audio/Video Recording

The interview(s) will be audio recorded for data collection purposes only. The recording will be destroyed once the data are transcribed.

Please provide initials below if you agree to have your interview audio recorded or not. You may still participate in the study even if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

_____ I do not want to have my interview recorded.

_____ I am willing to have my interview recorded.

Privacy/Confidentiality

The data the researcher will collect will include your first name, email address, and telephone number only. Participants will choose a pseudonym during the interview. The direct identifiers will be removed from the data after the interview. All other identifying information will be removed or destroyed after data collection or analysis.

The researcher will not release identifiable results of the study to anyone other than individuals working on the project without your written consent unless required by law.

Taking part is voluntary

Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision to participate in the research will not affect your employment or employment evaluations.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information that can be identified as yours will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

If you have questions

The researcher conducting the study is Judith Pannell, a doctoral student at the University of Georgia under the direction of Dr. Chris Linder. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Dr. Chris Linder at linder@uga.edu or at (706) 542.0791. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in the study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chairperson at 706.542.3199 or irb@uga.edu.

Research Subject's Consent to Participate in Research:

To voluntarily agree to take part in the study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you the entire consent form and have had all your questions answered.

Name of Researcher	Signature	Date
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Name of Participant	Signature	Date
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Please sign two copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.