

THE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NARRATIVES OF CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICERS:
MOVING THE NEEDLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

ROBERT GEORGE BRYANT

(Under the Direction of Talmadge C. Guy)

ABSTRACT

Chief Diversity Officers (CDO) are executives who are responsible for institutional diversity at colleges or universities in the U.S. Each CDO has a unique background, unique experiences and career path (Gose, 2006; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). Despite having a variety of academic backgrounds the knowledge that a CDO constructs while on the job is most important to their ability to be an effective diversity executive. Learning while on-the-job is the primary mode for learning given the absence of a degree or certification for diversity executives.

The purpose of this study is to examine the professional learning of CDOs who work in higher education. Professional learning is framed using informal, incidental and experiential learning theories. Ten CDOs at large research universities were the participants who shared narratives about their professional learning.

The narrative analysis data collection process was used to elicit detailed stories from participants. Each participant was interviewed up to one and one-half hours using a semi-structured interview. All 10 interviews were compared after reviewing each typed transcript

individually. Constant comparative techniques guided the data analysis process. Four themes emerged from the data that include narrative about how CDOs: (a) comprehend the complexities of the university; (b) identify professional learning strategies; (c) promote or confine opportunities via experiences, circumstances, and resources; and (d) “move the needle,” on institutional diversity.

Four conclusions were derived from this study. CDOs at large research universities: (a) develop an interest for diversity early in life; (b) validate their executive position within the university; (c) are purposeful about their professional learning; and (d) learn how to navigate the intricacies of the environment.

INDEX WORDS: Adult education, Chief Diversity Officer, experiential learning, higher education, informal & incidental learning, institutional diversity, professional learning

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to individuals who dedicate their career or time towards social justice issues. Your tireless work is a voice for those who go unnoticed in our communities and the nation. Thank you for your work and dedication towards making local, regional, national and global communities more inclusive spaces for all people.

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This is my foundation...it took a village to raise a child, but a community to develop an adult.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

More than 60 years ago, one of the most pivotal decisions rendered by the United States Supreme Court was made in the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) case. The *Brown* decision forever changed the education system for students of color and ignited a culture of struggle around racial separation. The decision also attempted to exclude minority or underrepresented groups from education. The *Brown* decision has and continues to impact national and social policies that shape education, not excluding those effecting the administration of colleges and universities. In the U.S., higher education is often seen as a necessity for building the social capital that is needed for upward career trajectory; therefore, earning a college degree is important. As a result of blatant forms of discrimination social mobility has historically been systematically limited for people of color. The concept of separate but equal, which was most predominate between 1896-1970s, set the culture for discriminatory practice that have prevented true equality in higher education. This is evident in the situations where access to enrollment was restricted for Black students and where resources were disproportionately distributed (e.g., historically/predominantly White institutions in particular versus historically Black colleges and universities). These situations presented challenges to accessing a higher education for Blacks and other minority populations. The presence of diversity in higher education has historically been undervalued and sometimes ignored, and there have been instances where diversity was dismissed entirely (Williams & Clowney, 2007). The social context in the Unites States of

America (U.S.A.) has been one where diversity has historically been ignored for the sake of discrimination, until visible social movements like the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s in the south disrupted the separate but equal paradigm. Federal legislation and social pressure from protests like the Women's Rights Movement and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s helped to end separate but equal policies in public education.

College and universities operate within a social context of the U.S. Consequently, the cultural backdrop of what happens in the larger context of the nation has influence on higher education institutions that function within the U.S. Institutional diversity has a stronger presence at some colleges and universities in the United States where the social context is set within a history of discrimination and oppressive practices. Several predominantly White colleges and universities have a pronounced anti-inclusivity history presenting an opportunity to develop a plan to elevate diversity efforts on campus. Some of the colleges and universities with a history of segregation and anti-diversity are located throughout the nation. Several colleges and universities in the country adopted a culture that ignored diversity concerns that has continued since its beginning. Jim Crow laws prevented equality and inclusion by punishing those who advocated for equality. Southern states were at the forefront of promoting segregation and the enforcement of Jim Crow laws strategies to restrict Blacks from education, with a profound presence in southern states such as Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia (Hurtado, Miley, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999). Additionally, there are former states of the Confederacy that were also mandated to legally enforce antidiscrimination laws. Promoting Jim Crow and other segregation laws established a national context that disregarded diversity.

The tone towards integration and equality nationally permeated all institutions due to the visible acts in support of discrimination for decades. There are some prominent examples by

state leaders that demonstrate the reaction when segregation was eliminated by federal law. Former Alabama Governor George Wallace's resistant stand to continue segregation at The University of Alabama was symbolically pronounced when he stood in front of the Foster Auditorium building on campus to block the enrollment of two Black students in 1963. President John F. Kennedy sent in the Alabama National Guard to force Governor Wallace to move aside, and provide protection for the students, Vivian Malone and James Hood. The hostile situation in Alabama was the reality of the climate for Black students attending predominantly White universities during the 1960s, especially at large land-grant research universities where precedence for higher education was created. The precedent also established an unspoken reality of separate but equal. The first university granted land by the federal government, The University of Georgia, was founded in 1785; the university excluded the admission of women until 1918 and was forced to desegregate in 1961 (Thelin, 1996). Hamilton E. Holmes and Charlene Hunter-Gault would be the first Black students entering The University of Georgia campus context infected with a culture of segregation. The history of segregation and hate has influenced public perception of certain institutions of higher education, but most significant is how it has permeated the campus culture and continues to exist systematically (Green, 2008).

Federal legislation established land and funding to provide postsecondary education to Black students, and to eventually provide equal public education resources as well (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2009). The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision ended desegregation in theory, despite several states that continued to ignore federal law to desegregate. Although states were required to establish Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to provide separate but equal postsecondary education for Black students, their policies continued to block

Black students' access to historically White colleges and universities. Eventually, federal legislation like the Higher Education Act of 1965 and affirmative action further advocated for stronger diversity initiatives. As more Black students arrived on predominantly White campuses they encountered problems that were eventually addressed through the establishment of offices that were to provide them academic and social support beginning in the early 1970s (Sutton, 1998). Some Whites protested integration, especially noted as they threw rocks and rioted when James Meredith arrived at the University of Mississippi. Some large research universities in the U.S. have a pronounced connection to the protest and were situated in the cradle of the Civil Rights Movement.

Faculty and staff were involved with voicing concerns for poor diversity efforts on campuses alongside student protests. Faculty joined with some students to create legitimacy for ethnic studies programs in 1968 (Hu-Depart, 2012). Universities in California, for example, responded to concerned student protests of occupying administrative offices and being vocal about the need for these departments on campus. The movement led to the creation of ethnic studies departments that have spread to campuses nationwide, marking the start of multiculturalism in the curriculum (Hu-Depart, 2012). Additionally, women's and gender studies departments gained entry on campuses. The addition of programs like ethnic and gender studies frames the strategic entry of diversity into curricula. A careful systematic approach to infusing diversity on campus, either in daily operations or curriculum, should be a strategic process that occurs at all levels of a college or university (Hays-Thomas, Bowen, & Boudreaux, 2012; Williams, 2008; Williams & Clowney, 2007; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). Balancing the competing interests among faculty and staff supporting or resisting diversity becomes a unique challenge for institutional executives.

Growth of Institutional Diversity in Higher Education

Institutional diversity is receiving more attention within the higher education community, but resistance still exists. First, threats to affirmative action policies along with discrimination on campuses both continue to create division – issues that have the potential to impact how diversity is valued. For example, the debate about affirmative action used in admission decisions’ continues to divide proponents who support the idea, versus those who perceive the policy as an entitlement. *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* (2010) demonstrates the ongoing legal debates about race being used as a factor for admission decisions in higher education. The *Fisher* case is a sharp contrast of a landmark decision nearly 10 years after the U.S. Supreme Court rendered the use of race in admissions as permissible if provision is used to increase diversity on campus (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003). Programs developed by the federal government had been employed as remedy for past discrimination and a strategy for college and university communities to diversify while enhancing campus life as a result of the *Fisher* decision. Additionally, affirmative action policy had been used to provide protection for admissions and services to groups previously denied access to higher education.

Second, the norm for some members of the faculty, staff, and student body at colleges and universities is the belief that diversity threatens the reputation of the institution or lowers standards of a campus (Brown, 2004). The myth of diminishing quality is exacerbated by studies that suggest how student learning and the institution benefits from diversity (Maruyama & Moreno, 2000). In my experience at four predominantly white institutions of higher education I witnessed many have misconceptions about diversity. In one instance, I observed a senior admissions officer disregard suggestions to increase minority enrollment by ignoring my

suggestions to recruit students in nearby urban high schools. Furthermore, there was no sense of urgency or pressure from campus executives to promote strategies that would boost minority enrollment even though it would enrich student learning.

Third, institutional diversity involves all aspects of college or university life, and it impacts multiple constituents. Diversity policies impact all areas on college and university campuses that include hiring practices, campus policies, and recognition practices (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). To approach diversity holistically means the institutional leadership should be intentional about examining recruitment policies and practices, reviewing curricular models, and looking at the make-up of the campus community. Managing diversity on college and university campuses is shifting to a post-affirmative action era that now involves an organized approach to reach the educational benefits of a diverse campus (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005).

Since the end of segregation in higher education, Black students and other minority populations have encountered discrimination and have felt isolated at predominantly (and historically) White institutions. Eventually, resources were provided to students of color with the transition to college, leading to the creation of minority affairs offices on predominantly White campuses (Sutton, 1998). In fact, offices that provide support and services to underrepresented populations have expanded to assist with recruiting and retaining students of color. Diversity eventually expanded to include more than just student issues; faculty recruitment, tenure policies, hiring practices, institutional growth, and federal compliance are all components of institutional diversity.

In order to effectively manage the complexity of the diversity work some college and university presidents have become more intentional about institutional diversity by hiring a Chief

Diversity Officer (CDO). The more institutional diversity grows in complexity the need for CDOs in higher education will likely expand. Procedural and symbolic strategies to manage diversity involve intentional planning of initiatives such as educational workshops, policy analysis, institutional assessment that involve members of the campus community, and coordinated by the CDO (Nixon, 2013). It is not the responsibility of the CDO to accept the full ownership of infusing diversity on campus; it is an organizational transformation process that involves all campus constituents (Pittard, 2010).

The Chief Diversity Officer Role in Higher Education

The CDO's role in institutions of higher education is growing increasingly significant. According to a report by the American Council on Education, more than 40 CDOs were hired at colleges and universities between 2005 and 2007. The appointment of an executive to manage institutional diversity is an indication of the value it has for college and university communities (Levine, 2011; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007b). The precedent of the CDO role, minority student services professionals, emerged from the 1970s when there were senior minority affairs positions created on campuses to provide programs and services for racial minority students (William & Wade-Golden, 2007a, 2007b). Now that diversity has expanded to include issues of equality and inclusion for students, employees, and policies, a CDO has a wider range of responsibilities than mid-level diversity officers (minority/multicultural professionals). According to Green (2008), the CDO is responsible for the advocacy of equality and inclusion to decrease problems that arise when opponents resist campus diversity issues. Creating a position at the executive level gives a CDO direct access to those who shape the strategic direction and culture of the institution (Williams & Clowney, 2007). Each campus will have a unique culture

and specific needs that will present the CDO with contextual challenges that will influence their potential to impact change (Nixon, 2013).

The CDO's relationship with other executives on campus is strategic and necessary in order to effectively implement an institutional diversity plan. Relationships with the president, provost, vice-presidents, and deans contribute to a web of support that enables senior diversity officers to work in the trenches of the university (Levine, 2011). The trenches of practice involve a process of creating consensus with other key leaders on campus in the work of CDOs on many campuses, especially to seek support for sacred and protected institutional issues (Green, 2008). Evidence-based practice has appeared to be useful for leveraging the attention of decision-makers and members of the faculty. I have noticed through observation and experiences that some CDOs develop reports or find information to prove why diversity is beneficial to a specific academic program or standards for undergraduate recruitment; however, the importance of diversity is sometimes still ignored by individuals who could significantly influence change. The goal of the CDO is to advocate for diversity, making it an institutional value where differences are leveraged as a resource.

A CDO is responsible for advocating for policies and challenging existing systems in shaping the institution's diversity agenda as the senior diversity officer (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). According to Williams (2008), the CDO is responsible for "guiding efforts to conceptualize, define, assess, nurture, and cultivate diversity as an institutional and educational resource" (p. 2). Several careful steps should be taken to implement a visible campus-wide diversity plan (Levine, 2011). Understanding the campus culture is an immediate step before a CDO attempts to implement change (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2011). Learning the culture of the campus means understanding traditions, history, and key constituents that will enable

progress. Williams and Wade-Golden (2007a) identify four characteristics of CDOs that connect directly to knowing the campus culture: (a) being a change agent; (b) being highly knowledgeable of diversity issues; (c) being relational leaders; and (d) relying on status and influence to implement change. Each of these four characteristics suggests the importance of knowing the context, which means understanding the institution in-depth before making sweeping changes.

Learning and the CDO Role

The creation of professional body of knowledge as a lifelong learning tool to be used by diversity executives in higher education offers sustainability to an emerging profession. This emerging profession is being formed by a community of professionals who are working with frameworks based on formalized professional training in a specific discipline, and sharing their successes and challenges. Collectively, their stories foster learning for individuals who may enter the CDO role or those who navigate the complexities of higher education. Schön (1987) asserts that importance of having a strong body of knowledge for professionals to continuously improve is needed in order to navigate the complexities of practice (daily work). A body of knowledge is a collection of common practical approaches to problems, and an educational resource for professional learning. A provost, for example, generally understands their role to be the chief academic officer of the university, and the majority of people who work in academic affairs most likely understand the provosts' responsibilities, as does the vice president for business and finance to be the chief business officer. Traditional executive roles in higher education have "paths to the chief leader role" with clear expectations about how to progress in institutional executive roles. For example, it is generally acceptable for someone to rise to a senior executive position through progressive leadership in an area of the institution (e.g., from

coordinator to assistant vice president). While a chief academic officer would understand the strong value for research and teaching in their roles, a chief diversity officer does not have the same “path to the chief leader role” accessibility.

In order to become a CDO a person must have a graduate or professional degree, but classroom knowledge is sometimes inadequate in preparing them to manage day-to-day occurrences (Cervero, 2003, p. 84). Information learned in a formal training program is often challenged in practical situations when professionals are faced with a unique situation that becomes a learning opportunity (Cervero, 2001). In conversation with a CDO (prior to this study) at a university in the southern region, the participant talked about often encounters with “on-the-job” issues that were not discussed in the classes that he took to earn his bachelors and masters degrees in education. In fact, he mentioned the issue of faculty resisting ideas to change strategies so that diversity is included in hiring or curricular issues. Levine (2011) mentions resistance to diversity due to those who rather protect the “status-quo,” day-to-day problems of CDOs in higher education. Another example of resistance came in the form of approaching diversity as a surface value without much depth; essentially, the university’s president did not address issues like pay equity, gender policies, and recruitment of underrepresented populations. Student programming was highlighted to “showcase” basic campus attempts towards diversity, as is the case for several higher education institutions.

There is inherent learning that is specific to being a CDO in practical situations associated with doing day-to-day “diversity work.” Practical situations are staged within a context where the situation presents unique issues absent in theoretical models that are used in issues of familiarity. Academic programs exist for most professions (e.g., teacher, banker, and attorney) so individuals can learn theoretical and foundation knowledge required for practice;

however, professionals who become CDOs do not have a specific degree program or set of courses to complete. Dr. Lawrence Potter, a veteran CDO, explained in an interview the importance of understanding the theoretical and practical nature of being a senior diversity executive (Levine, 2011). Most CDOs must rely on their professional training as a lawyer, student affairs practitioner, or another profession in order to identify theories and ideas for daily practice; yet, the practical skills that they need are often developed during their professional journey.

Professionals who become CDOs are responsible for designing strategies to educate themselves on how to be effective in the absence of models and educational training. According to Cervero (2001), the fundamental purpose of professional education is to improve one's practice and to continue learning while on the job. Professional education is a way to learn how to be a more effective practitioner given the knowledge and skills relevant to the role in a given context (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Daley, 2000). A CDO at a small liberal arts college who has knowledge of the campus constituents and culture would approach diversity differently than the CDO on a large research university of 40,000 students. My experiences as a mid-level diversity officer exposed me to understanding the impact of campus culture on institutional diversity. I have noticed a CDO at a large research university approach diversity on campus very methodical; acknowledging the politics and campus culture. At a large, comparable university in Florida the presence of diversity was felt on campus because they had a racial, ethnical, and gender representation of students, faculty, and staff on campus.

There are often exclusive situations that CDOs will face when doing "diversity work" (Barrett, 2013). Faculty who are used to teaching courses a certain way do not always welcome a new idea (or policy) to add a diversity component through a racial, gendered, or sexual

orientation perspective. Many times a CDO is the face of changes that are controversial. As I learned from a conversation with a CDO, the faculty he has worked with do not like to be “told to do something,” especially regarding sacred processes like tenure and promotion (Bryant, personal communication, April, 2012). He mentioned how he had to learn strategies to help him figure out ways to do his work and infuse diversity as an institutional priority (collaboration and diplomacy for example) across campus. Figuring out how to be a senior diversity officer in the context of a predominantly White institution is particularly challenging, given the historical and cultural backdrop that inform the spaces where learning occurs. The process of professional learning for CDOs is examined in this study to understand how professionals become effective diversity executives in a college or university context.

Professional learning should be engaged to enhance the professional, not simply as actively intended to organizational objectives (Rinaldi, 2007). Rinaldi (2007) describes forms of professional learning as: (a) training through a workshop or presentation; (b) embedded in the day-to-day context of the workplace; (c) engaging with a network of similar professionals (other CDOs); (d) being involved with some type of professional development (like the *National Association for Diversity Officers in Higher Education*); and (e) being connected to a professional mentor or career development coach. According to a model by Sheckley, Lehrhahn, Bell and Grenier (2008), key experiences, individual attributes, and environmental affordances should work together for optimal professional learning to occur. The model by Sheckley et al. (2008), as presented in Chapter 2, further validates the importance of multiple variables being utilized in order to formulate professional learning, and it offers a model that addresses and includes the needs of the professional. This approach to “professional learning” should be distinguished from other definitions of “learning” because of the variables used in concert, and

within the context of practice, that offers a meaningful outcome for professionals (in this case CDOs). This study uses the Sheckley et al. approach to frame the discussion about professional learning for CDOs in higher education.

The Purpose of a Chief Diversity Officer

Several college and university presidents at predominantly White institutions are being intentional about institutional diversity and proactive about limiting insensitive issues on campus by hiring a CDO. The addition of CDOs follows a shift towards making diversity a value that is placed at the core of the institution for excellence (Williams & Clowney, 2007). The CDO profession formally emerged on campuses during the late 1990's, and there is no standard method to prepare professionals for practice; therefore senior diversity executives must learn as practitioners. This study examines how CDOs engage their knowledge by participating in professional learning activities while on the job. The work associated with being a diversity executive and developing inclusive excellence on campus is a new concept for CDOs.

A CDO is often charged with “guiding efforts to conceptualize, define, assess, nurture and cultivate diversity as an institutional and educational resource” by collaborating with all areas of an institution (Williams, 2008, p. 2). Additionally, Williams (2008) states the importance of developing an institutional diversity plan to introduce the idea of diversity to the campus community and to avoid the embarrassing, controversial, or traumatic incidents that can arise in its absence. A diversity plan should be a process that includes members of the university community to avoid a “train-wreck” catastrophe (Gose, 2008). The catastrophe can be as major as a lawsuit or simple as a student incident that demonstrates insensitive behavior. Meir (2012) asserts that institutions that are without an intentional focus on diversity limit student learning, and impede strategies to strengthen campus-wide inclusive excellence.

The CDO position appeared at some institutions soon after a serious campus incident that was perceived to be insensitive. Additionally, problems on some campuses have prompted presidents to create the CDO position after a recommendation from an ad hoc committee that has assessed institutional diversity (Gose, 1996). Instead of waiting to react to a potentially embarrassing situation, several college and university presidents have proactively hired CDOs (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). Increased incidences of insensitivity on college and university campus motivated institutional leaders to designate a position solely dedicated to increasing institutional diversity. To decrease insensitive incidents meant focusing intentional resources towards making campuses more inclusive, and to strategically build a culture where diversity is valued; hence, presenting a unique situation for a CDO (Levine, 2011). There are campus issues that CDOs must confront, including those that offend people based on race, gender, ability, and other differences, and are still prevalent on college and university campuses and disruptive to diversity efforts. Green (2008) states that one aspect of being a CDO is encountering issues that introduce problematic situations for the campus community. For instance, a racial incident at Duke University offended Asian students after a predominantly White fraternity dressed in traditional Asian cultural attire, used Asian images offensively, and displayed total disregard for cultural appreciation at a public event (Quan, 2013). In a similar incident, a fraternity was removed from the Arizona State University community after its members hosted a controversial “MLK party” to symbolize inaccurate and offensive perception of African-American people (Ryman, 2014). In 2012, female faculty members at a university in the northeast U.S. settled a \$4.65 million lawsuit because male professors were paid significantly more than female professors (Heyboer, 2012). Even though the settlement corrected a past discrimination, it is an issue that impacts diversity on campus. All three costly incidents are

examples of what can occur when college and university leadership give inadequate attention or funding toward addressing diversity issues. These examples provide a further rationale for why diversity is increasingly becoming a value in higher education. A CDO is involved with efforts to address insensitivity and build synergy for institutional diversity on college and university campuses (Green, 2008; Pittard, 2010). The CDO is involved in all aspects of the college or university where diversity is being threatened through acts of insensitivity or behavior that leads to an embarrassing issue for the college or university if it is improperly addressed (Gose, 2008).

Insensitivity and upholding the status quo of separate but equal are historically connected to higher education institutions. Institutional history and culture impact how effective a CDO can be on college and university campuses. Historically, higher education has been an exclusive opportunity that started as a segregated part of American society. Higher education institutions exist with a backdrop where the social context of segregationist policies are embedded in a nation and has become a cultural norm. The history and culture provide the context where CDOs practice, and encounter successes and challenges. Based on my experience, I have noticed influential faculty or staff work diligently to maintain the status quo by advocating for the enrollment practices, campus policies, or access to groups they promote, and at times the outcome work against diversity. Faculty members who resist diversity have balked at the idea of change, which would be a challenge for a CDO. Green (2008) found that campuses in Texas each have a culture that positively or negatively impacted a CDO and essentially supported or eroded diversity efforts. Faculty of color who leave the university because of diversity issues, or low enrollment of women in science majors are both examples of eroding diversity on campus (Gose, 2008). Higher education in the U.S. was created in a social context where Blacks and other racial minorities were banished from learning, and the concept of diversity was

nonexistent. The CDOs in higher education are facing a context where history and culture permeate the fabric of its existence.

Learning as a Diversity Executive

Many professionals who become CDOs do so with limited information about what it means to be an effective diversity executive in higher education. Many CDOs have to understand the campus culture, and how to work with key decision-makers before they begin understanding how to be the senior diversity executive. Stuart (2012) wrote an article, “Diversity Trailblazer,” depicting the pioneer nature of these executives, some of whom may be new to higher education contexts. One aspect of being an effective diversity executive is learning how to leverage the authority that comes with the position and having access to key decision and policy makers (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2011). Recently, changing a policy on same-sex couples using their workplace benefits became a major issue for a CDO on a campus in the U.S. She was caught in the middle of a situation where the president and university faculty senate had to be involved with creating/modifying university policy. The authority granted to university executives provides them power to implement a process to modify policies, but CDOs often rely on their relationship with key power brokers on campus to implement change in institutional policy or procedures. Traditional executive roles at colleges and universities have historical value for professionals who enter traditional executive leadership roles. Academic deans are symbolic as chief academic officers for specific areas at universities and because of the chief academic officer role they have inherent authority that grants them the political capital needed to advance definitive decisions. Another example of a decision-maker with authority for change is the vice president for student affairs. The vice president for student affairs has the authority to make changes to systems and policies impacting campuses, especially students. In

both examples there have been a previous group of professionals who have shaped a body of knowledge for these professions over the years, and individuals have an idea of what is expected to be effective in each respective role. Professionals who become CDOs do not have this luxury because the profession is newer to higher education.

Professionals who become CDOs come from a variety of other professions with a specific background and theoretical perspectives. An individual with a legal background as an attorney or law professor will likely approach the CDO role with a framework based on their background. A professional who has student affairs or higher education training will likely approach the CDO role with a framework from a student development and success perspective. Two different CDOs I interviewed during a pilot study rose to their role through different paths; one as a government official and another through student affairs. The CDO who had a government background viewed the work of a senior diversity officer as one that is policy driven and compliance was a priority; while the one with a student affairs background approached practice as an institutional priority and relied on relationships with people to do his work. Daley (2000) suggests that professionals create a mosaic of knowledge that is constructed from learning that occurs from different experiences. In the case of the two CDOs mentioned above, each developed a “mosaic of knowledge” unique to their respective background. Houle (1980) asserts that professional learning is a combination of knowledge that is constructed from educational moments, some amount of experience, and continued professional education. Professional development activities, in addition to practical day-to-day situations, comprise a collection of learning moments. These moments provide spaces for CDOs to share their respective experiences, offer opportunities to share ideas that work and share theoretical frameworks with practical implications.

The context of practice presents variables that depend on the university culture, and the education offered by professional conferences that provide CDOs with the tools needed to create a professional learning portfolio. Learning is connected to the informal education activities that are rooted in a CDO's educational background, professional experiences, and knowledge gaining activities offered by organizations like the National Association of Chief Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE). Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) describe informal learning as something "embedded in our everyday activities, whether we are at work, at home, or in the community, and lacking institutional sponsorship" (p. 35). Adults may not even label these activities as learning (Merriam Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

Understanding the process of how a CDO learns will illustrate how these professionals construct knowledge to be effective diversity executives. Documenting the outcome of a successful diversity executive working at universities contributes useful information to an evolving profession, especially for novice CDOs who enter the profession for the first time. Mostly, a CDO works in uncharted terrain and must deploy learned strategies in navigating through higher education environments. Schön (1988) speaks of the swampy terrains of practice where unique issues are solved based on learning that occurred in practice. Any given CDO is liable to the conditions of practice that are solved quickly or presents complex challenges. Green (2008) found that CDOs learned from their on the job experiences due to the specific situations and unique challenges associated with being the senior diversity officer. One CDO was forced to resign when he attempted to implement a new tenure process without the consent or knowledge of the change by faculty (Gose, 2008). Learning how to implement change on campus or developing strategies to approach immediate challenges are a few examples of the difficulties that CDOs encounter daily.

It is only in practice where a CDO will learn how to make diversity issues important to a supervisor that does not see it as a value to the university. This study will examine the practical, or professional learning of CDOs who work in their respective contexts. Diversity work comes with challenges from forces that resist change, which means CDOs must rely on what they learn throughout their career in order to successfully navigate the trenches. This study will examine the professional learning of CDOs who work at colleges and universities.

Statement of the Problem

College and university communities are taking a more aggressive approach to leveraging institutional diversity after being forced to confront a long history of segregation and discriminatory practices. The history and culture of many U.S. institutions of higher education continue to provide a threat to diversity through hidden barriers for certain populations. After the arrival of Black students at predominantly White colleges and universities, administrators eventually adopted strategies aimed to provide social and academic support for Black and minority students to improve campus climates for minorities. Ethnic and gender studies departments later emerged after student protests to diversify the curriculum, and additional funding was provided after pressure from concerned faculty. The Civil Rights Movement led to federal legislation that provided opportunities for Blacks and other discriminated groups to attend colleges and universities that were only open to Whites. The impact of diversity on higher education has been a positive one. Increased diversity impacts student learning and organizational growth, which has resulted in resources from campus presidents.

During the past decade several college and university presidents have appointed a CDO as the senior executive for institutional diversity efforts. The profession is expanding with CDOs being hired at more colleges and universities annually for the purpose of planning and managing

an institutional diversity agenda. The CDO position often emerges after recommendations from a presidential committee on diversity as a strategy to strengthen institutional diversity (Gose, 2008). On occasion, I have noticed a racial or culturally insensitive incident spark a reaction, and magically a CDO is appointed as one of the responses. To move beyond a reactionary stance and more into a preparatory mode is to plan for and select a CDO (Williams, 2008). A crisis model for diversity begins with a campus incident and often receives a strong reaction from groups on campus. Shortly thereafter, a group is formed for the purpose of addressing diversity issues, a diversity response is developed, and no intentional in-depth adjustments are implemented (Williams, 2008). A CDO is hired to monitor day-to-day diversity issues that arise from different areas of a college or university.

Every CDO has a unique background and career path (Gose, 2006; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). Despite having a wide range of experiences from a variety of academic backgrounds, the knowledge that a CDO constructs while on the job is most important to their ability to be an effective diversity executive. For example, a CDO with a law degree will likely understand the legal aspects of the CDO role, but may not grasp to culture of a small liberal arts college. In a similar example, a CDO coming from the “faculty-ranks” will approach the role from the perspective of an academician. The campus must be prepared to receive a senior diversity officer, and the CDO must be able to cautiously understand the context (Williams, 2008). There are contextual issues associated with diversity in higher education that arise from those in opposition to change.

Learning how to be a CDO is most important to individuals entering the profession given the unique challenges they encounter associated with being a diversity executive. Formal learning is a prerequisite for becoming a CDO, but professional learning that occurs in practice is

equally important when addressing contextually-based moments. The context of practice is the stage where professionals perform their role based on their competencies developed through learning. Often a campus administrator has to develop relationships with key decision-makers to create a network of essential individuals to learn from; developing connections with other vice presidents, deans, and faculty is highly important when learning strategies to confront those who resist diversity on campus. Learning how to be an effective CDO is the focus of this study, given the complexities associated with doing “diversity work” in addition to being the senior executive for diversity. Professional learning involves practitioners referencing experiences from practice along with relying on other educational sources to use as resources (Daley, 2000; Webster-Wright, 2009). The need to engage with professional learning moments is important for a CDO given the contested nature of diversity on campus (which presents barriers to meeting some expectations) and because the CDO role is a recently developed executive position in higher education.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the professional learning of CDOs who work in higher education. Guiding this study were the following research questions:

1. What do CDOs identify as their learning needs?
2. What strategies do CDOs utilize for learning?
3. How do institutional factors inhibit or support CDOs’ learning?
4. What is the impact of professional learning for CDOs working in higher education?

Significance of the Study

The CDO position is new to colleges and universities (Banjeri, 2005), and it is a unique role that is different from other executive positions in academia. Diversity is a contested issue

on college and university campuses; hence, a CDO must justify why inclusion and equity are important while additionally confronting political challenges. In addition to being a new executive role with no formal training, the CDO position is perceived as useful by some and resisted by others (Tiereny, 2000; Pittard, 2010). CDOs are met with criticism linked to the notion that diversity programs and policies diminish resources. They face additional resistance based on their ability to adapt to necessary and essential changes (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2008). CDOs encounter unique issues such as individuals who question the validity and need for their position and from those who create barriers to education admission and access (Gose, 2006). Learning how to navigate the terrain of higher education is not something that is taught in a college class, instead it is gained from professional education or work experiences (Cervero, 2005). Academic deans or vice presidents have professional examples to observe and an established body of literature to refer to for their learning purposes; they do not expect to encounter the same level of resistance as a CDO may confront. Academic deans confront political issues, yet they have leverage and power tied directly to the academic structure of the university. As more CDOs are appointed, this study will become a much needed resource for individuals who become CDOs on college and university campuses.

Formal education is a framework for learning educational theories as “ways to do an occupation or work,” yet many issues that professionals encounter in practice are solved without theory. Professional learning extends beyond the classroom, using informal educational activities as a framework for professional development (Cervero, 2001). Informal education is the most common form of learning that is embedded in one’s daily activity (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Daley (2002) advocates for the use of professional education in combination with work experience as conduits for professional learning. Informal learning is the common thread that

unites how professionals construct a learning portfolio to use in practice. As the CDO profession continues to grow and expand, so will the need to enhance their practice and continue to learn so that they remain effective diversity executives.

The development of the CDO profession suggests the importance of learning from professional encounters. Colleges and universities in the U.S. are unique environments because of the strong feelings about diversity that can polarize a community into supporters and resisters. Some colleges and universities in the U.S. have a well-known history with diversity problems, many that persist in modern times and erode efforts of the CDO to implement policy, programs, and services. Professionals who become CDOs encounter campus environments within a larger national context with a history of problems with diversity. A CDO who is appointed to work across campus boundaries to foster a culture of value for diversity is expected to function in a profession that is new and be effective even though CDOs have limited academic or professional preparation that directly prepares them for the position.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine the professional learning of Chief Diversity Officers (CDOs) who work in higher education. Guiding this study were the following research questions:

- (a) What do CDOs identify as their learning needs?
- (b) What strategies do CDOs utilize for learning?
- (c) How do institutional factors inhibit or support CDOs learning?
- (d) What is the impact of professional learning for CDOs working in higher education?

The literature review highlights the growing significance of diversity in higher education, the emergence of the chief diversity officer role in higher education, and a professional learning framework using adult learning theories. This study emphasizes the learning of senior diversity officers given the complexities associated with their work, and their learning as experienced by professionals who are CDOs working in the context of higher education.

Several search terms and research databases were used to collect literature for this chapter. The search terms included: chief diversity officer, diversity executive, diversity and higher education, diversity leadership and higher education, professional learning, learning and diversity executive, competencies and diversity work, professional development and adult learning, adult learning and professional growth, and workplace learning. The search terms led to more than 400,000 articles that were filtered based on relevance. One example of a filter was limiting the search dates to capture articles between 2000 and 2014. Another technique I used

was to search multiple keywords at one time, such as “diversity officer” and “higher education” to focus on salient articles. The databases were identified through the libraries at The University of Georgia, The University of North Georgia, The Florida State University, and Georgia Southern University. The databases most used included Academic Search Complete, LGBT Life, Business Source Complete, Legal Collection, Education Research Complete, Professional Development Collection, Educational Administration Abstracts, ERIC, ProQuest, PsycINFO, Sociological Collection, Vocational and Career Collection, Women’s Studies International, and Urban Studies Abstracts. Google Scholar was utilized to expand the literature options or to find full text of important scholarly articles.

Introduction

This chapter begins with a historical overview of diversity in higher education, and how learning scaffolds the effective practice of CDOs. The literature begins with an overview of the growing importance of diversity in higher education. Diversity in higher education has been less of a priority for colleges and universities until the benefits to the institution were realized (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). This leads to the next section of the chapter that highlights the role of CDOs who were hired to manage institutional diversity at colleges and universities and to create a culture of inclusive excellence in higher education. Several college and university presidents were pressured to do more for diversity on campuses (a reactive approach), whereas others recognized the value diversity would have towards student learning (a proactive approach) and providing a more inclusive and welcoming work environment for faculty and staff. This led to the creation of a new profession of senior diversity executives in higher education – Chief Diversity Officers. The current body of knowledge for CDOs is emerging, and these professionals come from a variety of backgrounds. Therefore, learning in the context

of work is the focus of this study. Professional learning is discussed in the conclusion of this chapter to discuss the learning of CDOs while in the context of practice. This study contributes to the literature about learning and context, given the positionality (e.g., age, race, gender, background, etc.) of CDOs and the nature of their work.

Transitioning into the CDO role occurs without formal educational training or a degree program. Additionally, professionals enter the CDO role from a variety of academic and professional backgrounds that include, but not limited to law, education, or business. That means each CDO comes to the position with varying paradigms and professional frameworks based on their background. Learning as a source for constructing knowledge is an option for professionals to be functional and effective in their roles – a component not readily accessible to CDOs because it is an emerging profession encompassing professionals of diverse backgrounds. Learning to be a diversity executive within the contexts of higher education comes with individual and organizational competencies that lead to effectiveness (Hays-Thomas, Bowen, & Boudreaux, 2012). Williams and Wade-Golden's (2002) landmark study suggests that successful CDOs understood the institutional factors and culture, but they also exhibited interpersonal and political skills. Specifically, CDOs work across the span of the institution to implement the diversity agenda with eight core areas framing their approach:

1. elevate the visibility and credibility of institutional diversity as the CDO;
2. lead strategic diversity planning processes;
3. develop an infrastructure for institutional diversity;
4. enhance structural diversity, equity, and success;
5. engage with search processes;
6. cultivate awareness and appreciation for diversity;

7. interface with institutional accountability systems; and
8. develop new academic diversity courses and initiatives (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007).

The CDO profession is unlike other executive roles in higher education that have a historical lineage of precedent and a set of competencies for effective practice. For example, the vice president for student affairs position has been in place long enough that a general idea of what is expected in the role is understood. Diversity itself can be a polarizing issue on college campuses, hence presenting diversity work as a challenging task when resistance is imminent. Professionals who perform diversity work (diversity officers) are commonly people of color who also encounter issues based on their race, and sometimes gender (positionality). Nixon (2010) suggests the positionality of CDOs does impact their ability to be recognized as an equal at predominantly White institutions, signaling their doubts and need to go beyond their day-to-day work to prove themselves worthy, and defending diversity as an important issue. This study is about the professional learning of CDOs at large research universities. This chapter links together the literature about diversity, higher education, CDOs, and professional learning to focus this study on how these professionals continue to construct knowledge for practice.

Diversity in Higher Education

Over time the presence of diversity on college and university campuses has increased as a result of federal mandates, and sometimes pressure from activist movements. Higher education was established in North American colonies as an exclusive opportunity for a certain group of people. Thelin (1996) points to early failed attempts towards diversity during the colonial era when collegiate education was offered to American Indian Chiefs. An attempt to diversify higher education failed because higher education was designed exclusively for White upper-class

males to assume leadership as religious and political leaders (Nixon, 2013; Thelin, 2004). The context was one that encouraged non-White students to assimilate. It was Oberlin College that would open admissions for women and African-Americans in 1835, setting a precedent for diversity in American higher education (Thelin & Gasman, 2003). A federal mandate set forth by the Morrill Act of 1890 expanded access to higher education to African-Americans by establishing land-grant colleges that are called Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Nuss, 1996).

At the core of establishing higher education opportunities for Black Americans was the concept of separate but equal education based on race due to *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). The *Plessy* decision would set precedent in education as the nation valued the idea of separate but equal. The national tone towards diversity was to ignore its existence, thereby excluding access to predominantly White institutions. Colleges and universities were contextually structured to legally exclude Black students from applying to (and for that case attending) predominantly White institutions until the 1890 Morrill Act. The Morrill Act led to land-grant colleges that were separately created for Black students. Eventually, those who despised integration were defeated when separate but equal ideology was rendered illegal.

Protests erupted in opposition to separate but equal doctrine, in addition to segregation in public spaces like education. The *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision outlawed separate but equal educational opportunities and the desegregation of public education from the K-12 system to higher education. Institutional barriers still hindered the success of Black students despite the *Brown* decision. Additional civil right and affirmative action legislation would force change so that Black students would receive equal rights in access and facilities (Green, 2008). Predominantly White campuses were hostile environments for Black students,

requiring additional protection for the safety of students. Anderson (2004) reports the importance of *Brown* in setting a tone for correcting past discrimination, while also setting a precedent for stronger legislation like the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Separate but equal practices continued in the form of discrimination and exclusion despite *Brown*. Roebuck and Murty (1993) describe the social climate in higher education, stating:

The extensive desegregation of many southern school districts and colleges and universities resulted as a consequence of several combined factors: federal courts' civil rights decisions, Black (sic) marches and demonstrations, federal troop action, the threat of withdrawal of educational grants to southern institutions, and the tying of education funding to nondiscriminatory practices (e.g., basic educational opportunity grants, supplemental educational opportunity grants, state student incentive grants, college work study grants, guaranteed student loans, and national direct student loans). (p. 668)

In fact, federal legislation was required in the form of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act to prohibit the allocation of federal funds to segregated schools. Ten states reluctantly embraced segregation and were forced to create a desegregation plan (Roebuck & Murty, 1993).

Institutions for Blacks were created and affectionately called Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to provide higher education for Black students during segregation. The idea for HBCUs gained momentum after the second Morrill Act of 1890, but the concept was based on separate but equal space to educate Black students. In fact, Black faculty could only work at HBCUs until the passage of federal legislation to end discrimination. Opponents to segregation used the "separate but equal" clause to maintain segregationist policies to keep Black students away from predominantly White campuses. In fact, Alabama, Georgia, Florida,

Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina used a variety of administrative, legal, and legislative tactics to deny Blacks admission to White colleges and universities (Williams, 1981).

Legislation from the federal government was used to later ensure Black students admittance into large research universities like The University of Georgia, The University of Alabama, The Universities of Mississippi, and many more. The University of Georgia was the first large research-intensive institution in 1961 to be forced by court order to admit two Black students – a trend that would be followed by other colleges and universities, but met with campus riots by those in opposition.

The end of segregation eventually led to Black students attending predominantly White institutions, but problems persisted for minority students. Campus climate for Black students proved to be unwelcoming, cold, and intimidating because of hidden systems and policies (Roebuck & Murty, 1993). Even though it was unintended the end of segregation marked a revolutionary shift towards stronger diversity in higher education. Eventually, desegregation of higher education led to more Black students attending institutions that were historically and predominantly White; an environment that was unwelcoming and often hostile climate for African American students (Sutton, 1998).

Affirmative action legislation was used to remedy past discrimination that limited or blocked access to higher education for certain populations. African-Americans and other underrepresented groups were not afforded equal opportunity to higher education due to laws and practices making it illegal. Diversity is different from affirmative action; however, the terms are closely linked when conversation of equity and inclusion occur. Gichuru (2010) reports the erosion of affirmative action policy in higher education as opponents continue a relentless campaign to eliminate its existence. Affirmative action is most visible among arguments about

the use of race in admissions, which is a conversation that has been ongoing since 1978 when the *Bakke* decision rendered race based admissions procedures as illegal. Most recently the U.S. Supreme Court heard a case that considered race and admissions in *Fisher v. University of Texas* (2012). The case was another attempt to eliminate affirmative action practices in higher education on the grounds that it hurts applicants despite efforts to reach a diverse student population.

Opponents of affirmative action cite institutional quality and prestige erosion as a casualty of race-based admissions (Gichuru, 2010). Discontinuing affirmative action only underscores the low enrollment for racial minorities and other underrepresented groups in higher education (Gichuru, 2010). Lewis and Davidson (1998) found that policies that allowed diversity and other special factors for admission enhanced diversity on campus instead of diminishing quality. Additionally, there is no evidence to support claims of a weakened image or academic quality by allowing affirmative action policies. Arguments against what are considered preferential factors continue to create problems as demonstrated in California with the abolishment of affirmative action policy in higher education (Gichuru, 2010). The erosion of diversity on campus not only hurts diversity on campus, but also leaves low percentages of minorities to educate peers about their culture that essentially decreases insensitive behavior (Archibald, 2010).

Those who feel it is not an important issue weaken efforts to enhance campus diversity. States such as California which have abolished affirmative action practices have noticed significant decreases in racial minorities enrolled (Archibald, 2010). Additionally, acts of insensitivity and hate are occurring as individuals seek to promote stereotypes or poor depictions of minorities (Gichuru, 2010). Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2005) argue for efforts to enforce

policy and education to decrease negative behavior that erodes the ability to encourage diversity on campus. Choosing to ignore the impact of diversity has led to institutions confronting embarrassing situations such as the one at The University of California, Los Angeles (Huffingtonpost, 2013) where African-American males protested the university due to poor diversity efforts.

Impact of Diversity in Higher Education

Valuing diversity means making purposeful use of processes and strategies that move the concept of diversity from the margins to being a core institutional value (Hays & Thomas, 2004). Focusing on the benefits of diversity is an opportunity to gauge the campus climate for potential oppression or discrimination, which means harnessing strategies to be diverse in a post-affirmative action environment (Allen & Montgomery, 2001; Kreitz, 2008). According to Green (2008), there is more attention towards diversity in response to attempts to weaken affirmative action, arguments against the use of race in admissions decisions, and little to no accountability to diversify the faculty or student population on campus. For example, the lack of Blacks and other racial minority faculty on campus negatively impacts recruitment and retention of Black students (Green, 2008).

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s provided the catalyst that would allow Black faculty to be educators at predominantly White universities (Green, 2008). The perception that there are little to no racial minority or women as faculty creates concern among current and potential constituents as well (Green, 2008). Intentional efforts to diversify the faculty enhance recruitment, and enrich the overall educational environment for constituents (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). The presence of diverse faculty serves as evidence to students that there are resources available on campus that can provide academic support and mentorship (Milem,

Chang, & Antonio, 2005). Faculty of color sometimes situate diversity issues as important, and tend to incorporate diversity into their curriculum (Brayboy, 2003). Diverse faculty adds to the university overall and ultimately has an impact on student recruitment and retention.

Students who are exposed to diverse ideas, conversations in diverse classrooms, and culturally-based experiences are equipped for the diversity they will encounter in the global workforce (Meir, 2012). Powers (2004) asserts that students who have the opportunity to learn from diverse and pluralistic communities are better prepared graduates because they have learned the benefit of pluralistic environments. Student learning outcomes are positively impacted when diversity is intentionally valued throughout a campus (Meir, 2012; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). Colleges and universities are training ground for future citizens who will be leaders in communities that are becoming more diverse each day due to ongoing change that cause social change.

In response to campus and social pressure arose resources to support Black students who were populating predominantly White campuses. Campus protests by students paralleled federal legislation, which ultimately led to the creation of safe spaces for Black students called cultural centers (Nixon, 2013; Sutton, 1998). Cultural centers were initially created to provide advocacy for students who were culturally different, and to also offer diverse learning opportunities for college and university communities. The creation of cultural centers emerged from student protests and social pressure following the desegregation of public education so that African-American students could feel safe and supported (Pittard, 2010). Cultural centers also served as a comfort zone for students who were labeled minority and became a resource to network with other students of similar backgrounds or experiences (Sutton, 1998). Professionals hired to staff cultural centers were charged with coordinating efforts to assist student's transition into college

and to develop strategies to retain students of color. Campuses were unfriendly to Black students as a result of segregation, making cultural centers a safe haven to connect to others with similar experiences while learning ways to cope with a hostile environment (Sutton, 1998).

Professionals who staff cultural centers often focus on retention efforts and diversity programs, and help to decrease acts of insensitivity through education. Initial centers were named multicultural and the trend was to have a dedicated staff member. Over time diversity has grown in such a way that institutional policy, hiring practices, compliance concerns, and management processes impact how well diversity is embedded in the day-to-day operations on campus.

College and university leaders responded to diversity needs by hiring diversity officers during the early 1970s. Early diversity officers (those who would work in cultural centers) were minority affairs officers (e.g., Director/Coordinator/Vice-President for Minority Affairs), hired to oversee cultural centers and to be a resource to racial minorities (Nixon, 2013; Pittard, 2010; Sutton, 2008). Minority affairs offices/centers were created to provide social and academic support to Black students with transitional and other personal issues experienced due to discrimination and feelings of exclusion (Sutton, 2008). Eventually “multicultural” replaced “minority” to reflect a focus on culture, as opposed to concentrating only on racial issues (Featherstone, 2011). According to Sutton (1998) minority/multicultural affairs officers focused on cultural diversity with most of their attention towards student programming, outreach, and service. Multicultural student affairs programs still exist on predominantly White campuses with similar missions of providing academic and social support to students of color, differently abled students, gay and lesbian students, women students, and other student populations that feel marginalized on campuses (Sutton, 1998).

In addition to multicultural affairs was a movement to implement multiculturalism and diversity throughout campus. Student academic and social support was fundamental to the emergence of diversity and critical to the evolution of the modern-day concept of diversity. Additionally, ethnic studies were embedded in the early movement to increase campus diversity. Early movements to advocate for ethnic studies programs were an outcome of the Civil Rights Movement (Hu-DeHart, 1993). In fact, higher education institutions on the West Coast were the first to implement ethnic studies programs on campus, marking a step towards a diversified curriculum. As higher education evolved the academic fabric of higher education began offering programs in ethnic studies, women's studies, and gender studies (Olzak & Kangas, 2008). Essentially, the climate on college and university campuses experienced a paradigm shift to account for individuals who were marginalized in and out of classroom spaces (Brown, 2004). Hundreds of ethnic studies programs still exist across the country to educate students on ethnic based issues, and how these populations are impacted in the U.S. To be sustainable programs meant integrating more into the "mainstream" curriculum where cultural discussions were often absent (Early, 2001).

Diversity is often used interchangeably with similar concepts such as multiculturalism, access, equity, inclusion, and affirmative action. In fact, diversity actually incorporates all of those concepts and others that collectively contribute to a more inclusive community (Cox, 2011; Norton & Fox, 1997; Thomas, 2001; Williams & Clowney, 2007). Institutions of higher education have changed from the colonial era and diversity has evolved as well. Adapting to social growth led to new offices and staff to support the academic and social integration of underrepresented populations like Black students. Ethnic studies and other programs to enhance the campus community arose as well to begin addressing diversity in the curriculum. Higher

education as an enterprise has shifted from a model where diversity was a compliance issue to a modern approach that leverages diversity for student learning and institutional growth.

Colleges and universities adapted as diversity requirements mandated change within the organization. Four institutional diversity paradigms illustrate how colleges and universities responded to diversity over time (Pittard, 2010). Each paradigm, developed by Williams and Clowney (2007), frames how the organization (institutions of higher education) models have allowed institutions to adapt based on the multiple interpretations of diversity in addition to the unique contextual factors specific to an environment. The first paradigm/model offered by Williams and Clowney (2007) is the affirmative action and equity model that is anchored in compliance as a central concept. Affirmative action is a policy used by the federal government to remedy past discrimination among African-Americans and other disadvantaged groups. The Affirmative Action and Equity Model sought to remedy the ills of past discrimination in higher education, and was created from legislative acts and political protests of the 1950s and 1960s (Williams & Clowney, 2007; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). The model has been helpful in terms of increasing the enrollment of diverse students and boosting the number of minority and women faculty members. One limitation of the model is a lack of attention to core institutional issues directly connected to a comprehensive approach towards diversity. Additionally, the model lacked an approach that would systematically address issues embedded throughout the institution such as policy, hiring, and recruitment of diverse faculty and students. The affirmative action model only accomplishes a portion in the organizational change process absent of an in-depth approach to truly institutionalize diversity (Williams & Clowney, 2007).

The increase of students of color at predominantly White institutions led to a need to develop strategies to ensure their success (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). The Multicultural

Model frames how campuses responded to the need for supporting diverse populations by offering support for transitioning and remaining in college. As a by-product, the model exposes the campus to a changing community. Three elements frame the Multicultural Model: helping members of different cultures flourish in a challenging environment, exposing people to cultural similarities and differences to expand their perspective, and advancing research about groups who have been previously invisible in higher education (Williams & Clowney, 2007). A caveat to the Multicultural Model is the disconnection with decision-makers who would be necessary for institutional buy-in and sustainable change for a diverse campus. Buy-in from senior campus executives is necessary for sustainable change that centers diversity as a visible component, encouraging all constituents to make adjustments.

A third paradigm/model, the Academic Diversity Model, links diversity to the academic activities of the college or university (Williams & Clowney, 2007). The model suggests that the presence of diverse cultures further enhances the environmental conditions for learning. Intergroup relations and dialogue are addressed through discussions about differences to help people understand others (Williams & Clowney, 2007). The Academic Diversity Model is focused on diversity as a contribution rather than a deficit to the educational experience. The model invites individuals to challenge their existing views about diversity as they interact and share experiences with those who are culturally different. The limitation of the Academic Diversity Model is its sole focus on the curricula, which does not account for issues impacting the overall campus community.

A fourth paradigm/model was later developed to situate diversity as an opportunity for institutions to be excellent in such a way that involves all constituents associated with a college or university. Inclusive Excellence is developed on a foundation that encourages institutions to

adopt a more inclusive concept for organizational transformation (Williams, Berger & McClendon, 2005; Williams & Clowney, 2007). The Institutional Excellence Model is a framework suggesting that leaders assess the environment and understand how best to implement diversity. It is guided by six core assumptions that involve internal and external pressures creating a need for a diversity rationale, where diversity is a resource that should be leveraged to move toward institutional excellence, intellectual and social development are gained through educational experiences, allocated resources are available to support the academic achievements of diverse students, cultural differences contribute to the educational environment and enhance learning, and active research exists to examine ethnicity, gender, power, privilege and the intersection of those factors (Williams & Clowney, 2007). This model leverages diversity as a resource for growth, simultaneous with accounting for pressures that might slow change efforts. Williams, Berger and McClendon's (2005) description of the Institutional Excellence Model share many of the factors described by Williams and Clowney (2007) three models, yet in one visual and succinct model. The inclusive excellence model illustrates the multiple factors involved with designing an institutional diversity plan.

Efforts to institutionalize diversity have fallen short due to lack of attention for structural adjustment, public relations, and an environmental assessment that created shortcomings for several universities (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). According to Milem et al. (2005), diversity must be valued and promoted as a major campus priority by senior executives to gain momentum. In fact, research findings suggest that college and university presidents who visibly support diversity and provide resources for institutional diversity have experienced noticeable change on campus (Green, 2008). Williams and Wade-Golden (2007) encourage campus

leaders to carefully plan for institutionalizing diversity by assessing the campus climate, and communicating with constituents to include their input, and engage others with the process.

Adult Education and Diversity in Higher Education

Adult education has also influenced the new paradigm of diversity in higher education. African-Americans (or Blacks) were denied access to most educational opportunities, especially participation in college and university offerings throughout history. This led to advocacy from organizations and pioneers who sought out change (Peterson, 1996). During the mid-1800s the Freedman's Bureau was established by the federal government to provide resources for Blacks after the Civil War (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994). Stubblefield and Keane (1994) discuss the role of the American Missionary Association in a partnership with the Freedman's Bureau, which led to the creation of higher education for Blacks known as historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The social attitude of the south following the Civil War was one that was resistant to higher education for Blacks (or anyone of color), but Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois resisted the norm.

Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois both understood the connection between education and social participation in the U.S.; however, their perception on the social role of Blacks and education were different. In 1881 Washington founded Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute (now Tuskegee University), an institution that supported his philosophy that Blacks should focus on jobs and education (Potts, 1996). Washington believed that advocacy for racial equality would create backlash from Whites and distract from a harmonized society. On the contrary, DuBois opposed efforts to limit education for Blacks (Potts, 1996). According to Potts (1996), DuBois promoted his philosophy of equal educational opportunities for Blacks that would lead to political advancement and social mobility. Regardless of their opposing agendas

both educators supported education for Blacks and contributed to the creation of higher education programs for Blacks.

To reform or change social conditions for Blacks, several individuals like Washington and DuBois advocated for opportunities for racially disadvantaged people. Both Washington and DuBois attended college, graduating from Hampton University and Harvard University, respectively. This background provides insight about their positions. Born into southern slavery, Washington participated in adult education programs (college and university), and was involved with crafting an adult education program in Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute (Frantz, 1997). Born free and in the north, DuBois participated in adult education programs (college and university) and wrote a paper for the 1934 Bronze Booklet curriculum series to educate Blacks (Guy & Brookfield, 2009). The Bronze Booklet curriculum series was a strategy led by Alain Locke to educate Blacks (Guy, 1996).

Educators such as Washington, DuBois, and Locke were pioneers who were doing diversity work, which at the time appeared to be more rooted in a racial context as compared to modern diversity frameworks. Modern-day diversity workers also encounter situations where the larger context has a dominant culture and ideology that presents challenges to diversity efforts. Additionally, professionals of color who are doing diversity work find themselves in contexts where the college or university has a history (and possibly a culture) of discrimination, and where change is a polarizing issue when diversity is center-stage. All three contributed to the reformation of adult education beyond the scope of assimilation only, and the three also contributed to the precursor of diversity in higher education.

The Chief Diversity Officer Role

Diversity has become a complex issue permeating all sectors of higher education since the 1960s. Institutional diversity has become a resource for student learning, and college and university leaders recognized how positive an impact it can be for the institution. These factors influenced the creation of a new executive role called Chief Diversity Officers (CDO). The need for intentional oversight for diversity was the result of a post-affirmative action stance to leverage diversity as an institutional value, especially on predominantly (and historically) White institutions. Several campus presidents felt it necessary to expand diversity efforts on campus by adding a campus executive to oversee institutional diversity efforts, hence the creation of the chief diversity officer role (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). College and university presidents were at the forefront of managing diversity until the hiring of diversity officers became a popular trend during the end of the 20th century. According to Pittard (2010) the CDO is a relational chief executive who provides specific diversity leadership and functions as an institutional change agent. Williams and Wade-Golden (2006) state the CDO is the senior officer who has a greater vision for diversity as compared to its predecessor. To contrast the minority affairs and CDO roles the scholars claim that:

What distinguishes the current executive diversity officer from its historical predecessors is the functional definition of diversity as a resource that can be leveraged to enhance the learning of all students and is fundamental to institutional excellence, in addition to its historic definition as the presence of individuals that differ by race, gender, or some other social identity characteristic, (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007, p. 2)

The hiring of CDOs is another response from some college and university leaders to situate diversity as an issue of significance and a way to spotlight the concept of inclusive

excellence. Since the emergence of the CDO role, one national landmark study was conducted by Williams and Wade-Golden (2007) is a comprehensive glance into what it means for higher education. Additional research is being conducted, including up to six dissertations about CDOs.

The CDO role has emerged quickly on college and university campuses nationwide (Gichuru, 2010; Nixon, 2013; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). Higher education institutions like Harvard University, Oklahoma State University, The University of North Texas, The University of Georgia, Emory University, and Clemson University are among the many colleges and universities with CDOs on campus. The National Association for Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) is a professional association established by CDOs in 2007, signifying the need to develop a network of senior diversity executives due to the growth of a the profession. The founding of the NADOHE also established a community of learners for novice and experienced CDOs to share ideas and best practices. Professional associations like NADOHE are spaces for CDOs to learn informally through workshops and networking with others who do similar work. As the profession grows, CDOs as a profession is emerging into an executive identity among in higher education. CDOs are growing in numbers in higher education, and developing into an identity as the “CEO for institutional diversity concerns.

Pittard (2010) describes the CDO as the “diversity president” because of the executive rank in the institution as well as the responsibility associated with the position. The senior diversity officer role follows lower ranking diversity roles primarily due to a strategic approach to diversity in higher education (Williams & Clowney, 2007). A strategic diversity platform (SDP) was the catalyst that led to CDOs in response to campus incidents. According to Williams and Clowney (2007) the eight phases of the SDP are (a) an incident occurs within the campus community; (b) a response from constituents; (c) potential resistance and protest(s); (d) an

institutional response is presented; (e) an institutional committee is formed; (f) the committee meets to discuss ideas and potential outcomes; (g) a SDP is administered at the executive level of the institution; and (h) a process and commitment for change is administered. Nationally, college and university presidents and provosts have decided to hire CDOs to avoid insensitive or discriminatory campus incidents (Pittard, 2010; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). It is of high priority that CDOs are integrated within the institutional structure in such a way that the role is perceived as a serious approach towards diversity rather than just a symbol without substance, and to be visible in an effort to garner buy-in for diversity (Green, 2008; Nixon, 2013; Pittard, 2010; Williams & Clowney, 2007).

A CDO working to integrate diversity into the fabric of a university should understand the nuisances of what is required to be effective. Professional competencies and/or standards do not exist for senior diversity officers, as they do for many other professions. CDOs approach their role with a set of skills and a background rooted in their preparation for business, education, law, or other academic disciplines. Additionally, the context of a college or university campus provides a unique challenge because of the nature of how diversity is perceived. Doing “diversity work” is unique “in a traditional organizational structure; it will be met with resistance and opposition due to the transactional state of the academy” (Pittard, 2010; Tiereny, 2000). A CDO not only has to deal with the day-to-day challenges associated with promoting diversity, but s/he must also learn how to navigate the terrains of being an effective executive. The next section outlines what contributed to what CDOs should consider for being more competent so that they are successful in their role.

The Evolution of CDOs in Higher Education

The CDO profession has developed since the later part of the 1990s and early 2000s (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). Research about CDOs emerged soon after the profession formed to understand the role and purpose of a new executive for diversity in higher education. This section provides evidence of early studies where diversity practitioners were studied by Maltbia (2001) to gauge diversity competency and effectiveness. Green's (2008) study confirms strategies for practice, in addition to asserting how impactful CDOs are to increasing minority faculty on campus. Gichuru (2010) further addresses the need for CDOs and the impact these professionals have at all levels and corners of an institution. Learning how to be an effective CDO in higher education environments is the concept of Pittard's (2010) research. Pittard calls the senior diversity officer the "diversity president" to signify the importance of the role in higher education. A case study by Meir (2012) examined how embedded diversity was throughout curricular, co-curricular, policy, and recruitment strategies of an institution. Nixon's (2013) research of women of color who are CDOs in higher education along with success and challenges they experience. The common areas of current research about CDOs involve conversations about diversity competency, effective practice, CDOs responsibilities, and the impact of CDOs in higher education. This study will understand the process of learning of CDOs who work in higher education; however, a discussion of competencies and effectiveness add to the foundation of this study.

Maltbia's (2001) study about diversity officers examined the competency and learning of diversity practitioners. The study focused on diversity practitioners (now called diversity officers) who worked in corporate or private sector organizations. Evidence of early diversity officers in organizations show that professionals relied on past and current learning experiences

to construct their learning or enhancing their professional competencies (Maltbia, 2001).

Competency was described as an underlying characteristic of a person that results in effective professional performance (Maltbia, 2001). The results of the study found that a fusion of theory and practice was beneficial to practitioners' competency level (Maltbia, 2001). Theory was mostly learned or self-developed based on formal classroom-based learning, and work experiences from day to day work and conferences. Maltbia used a critical incident approach as a research design strategy to get the in-depth information rich stories from participants.

Flanagan (1954) describes the critical incident technique as a way to collect specific information from those in the best position to make the most accurate observations and evaluations.

Essentially, Maltbia used critical incidents that occurred with diversity practitioners to focus specifically on competencies and learning based on first-hand experiences of these professionals.

Maltbia's study is an early dissertation to discuss diversity officers working on the executive level of an organization.

Green (2008) conducted a study about the impact that CDOs have on the recruitment of minority faculty. Green found that Chief Diversity Officers defined diversity as a contextually driven concept that is mostly focused on race and ethnic components of diversity at their institutions. Green's study was framed using institutional culture and how adaptable the campus was to change. In regards to institutional culture, Green specifically examined what cultural inhibitors and barriers influenced the effectiveness of CDOs in their campaign to enhance faculty diversity. Four core elements contributed to CDOs' effectiveness: communication, collaboration, relationships, and resources. The multi-case study design focused on three CDOs and six administrators for data sources. Findings suggest that CDOs positively impacted faculty diversity through education, persuasion and facilitating strategic approaches. Green's model

illustrates the CDO's role in respect to the institutional culture: catalyzing "changes in attitudes, behaviors, and practices" (p. 129), education and training "specific administrators' groups and faculty search committees" (p. 130), persuading members of the campus community about the need for diversity, and serving as a facilitator in search and recruitment processes. Green highlights the complex charge that some CDOs have in diversifying the faculty, but lack information about how learning and career development influenced their practice.

Gichuru (2010) interviewed six CDOs to understand how they impacted admissions of minority students in a post-affirmative action era. As more attacks to dismantle affirmative action and other initiatives that support minorities grow, there is more of a need for institutions of higher education to be more creative for institutional diversity initiatives (Gichuru, 2010). Gichuru's study suggests that CDOs are involved with the process of finding creative strategies to recruit minority students, including working with the admissions team, having minority faculty and staff in all parts of the university, and focusing on institutional policies. Additionally, helping minority students to matriculate towards the goal of graduation was included as well because many students are unprepared or have no motivation to graduate. Education and awareness of creative approaches to recruiting and retaining minority students was central to the idea of growing student diversity in a post-affirmative action environment (Gichuru, 2010). Diversity not only improves the overall campus environment, but student learning is also enhanced by encouraging cross-cultural interactions and analytical abilities are enhanced from those encounters (Carriuolo, 2003; Gichuru, 2010).

Diversity issues are recognized at the president's cabinet-level with a CDO present (Pittard, 2010). It is a position established to monitor the complexities of diversity at all levels of the institution. Pittard (2010) suggests the CDO role "is seemingly unorthodox in a traditional

organizational structure...[and] will be met with resistance and opposition (p. 25).” It appears that the CDO role comes at a time when compliance initiatives erode each day. A CDO often comes at the moment of crisis or as an opportunity to leverage diversity as an institutional asset (Pittard, 2010). Preparing for the new “diversity president” (p. 3) is a necessary organizational adjustment that is completed prior to hiring a CDO. Williams and Wade-Golden (2007) provide an outline to help campuses adjust for a CDO that include: (a) develop a CDO planning committee with recommendations; (b) conduct assessment of the campus to benchmark capabilities and infrastructure; (c) engage in an internal diversity capacity audit on campus; (d) develop a CDO financial and resources plan; and (e) integrate the reports and share the information with the president. Seeking a CDO competent or able to learn competencies is the important next step (Pittard, 2010). For example, to be effective at the planning table requires competencies of political astuteness and making tough decisions (Pittard, 2010). Strategies to learn or enhance competencies are embedded in their respective academic background, including discipline related research and academic journals.

Meir (2012) worked with CDOs to identify participants for a study that examined the process of preparation and implementation of CDOs in higher education. Opportunities to interact with diverse others better prepares students at diverse institutions of higher education (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Powers, 2004). A case study of a Midwest university confirms Williams and Clowney (2008) claim that diversity must be integrated throughout the university to implement change. The institutions’ leadership must embrace diversity as an institutional priority then encourage the same in curricular and co-curricular areas (Meir, 2012). Meir’s study also suggests structural changes to strategically recruit minority faculty and students, making diversity a mainstay in campus programs in and out of the classroom, an

intentional mention of diversity in the institutional mission, and recognition to individuals and groups that champion that cause of diversity. A caveat to Meir's study is that only one CDO was interviewed, and that only one case was used in a specific region of the U.S. The study did not mention learning or professional development situations in regards to diversity officers.

The CDO's access to the president is important to leverage authority, and to influence offices, programs, and departments throughout the university (Pittard, 2010; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). College and university presidents are establishing intentional systems that go beyond just symbolic diversity, and also inserting diversity into the fabric of the institution (Nixon, 2013). Nixon provides an in-depth look at the experiences of CDOs who are women of color. The study suggests that professional development of these women came in the form of a network through NADOHE mentoring by old and new connections and self-directed approaches to resources. Essentially, the CDOs in Nixon's study constantly monitor their professional identity, consider the institutional positionality, recognize the impact of their social identities, and manage an exercise of agency (Nixon, 2013).

Standards and Expectations of a Chief Diversity Officer

An essential function is that CDOs make the issues of "campus climate, infusing diversity into the curriculum, faculty development and other diversity matters top priority" (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2008, p. 40). Another priority for CDOs is leading campus-wide diversity planning and implementation efforts, seeding new diversity initiatives and developing diversity educational strategies for executives, faculty, staff and students (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2008). Green (2008) found that CDOs manage multiple expectations while identifying creative methods to foster diversity on campus. Often CDOs rely on their connection to the president or provost to enable their abilities to make diversity campus-wide (Kezar et al., 2008). According

to Williams and Wade-Golden (2008) CDOs engage their interpersonal skills and leverage relationships as tools to advance campus diversity efforts. Learning the skills to be an effective CDO means understanding the campus culture, developing key connections, and simultaneously identifying creative strategies.

According to Gilbert, Stead and Ivancevich (1999), diversity management is a voluntary program that organizations design to develop greater inclusion for its members. Diversity management has evolved from the legal policies of affirmative action and equal employment opportunity. Scholars state that students, faculty and other stakeholders see affirmative action and equal opportunity as a benefit towards certain cultural groups (Francis, 2003; Kreitz, 2008), but see diversity as a necessary component for the institution (Aguirre & Martinez, 2008). According to Aguirre and Martinez (2008), the American public and stakeholders in higher education support the need for diversity within the context of colleges and universities.

The CDO will likely collaborate with peers and other institutional members to advance diversity initiatives. In order to affect structural and procedural aspects throughout the campus community, the CDO will have to collaborate with academic deans, staff members, faculty senate, students, alumni and administration to design and implement campus diversity efforts. Green's (2008) findings suggest that CDOs are able to collaborate with faculty by introducing new strategies for search processes and seeking methods to diversify faculty. CDOs have limited power (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2006) and rely on strategic communication and intentional collaborations to implement change on campus (Green, 2008).

CDOs must rely on status, persuasion and symbols as sources of power (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2006). Being positioned within the organizational structure and access to the president and provost creates visibility to the CDO role. Green (2008) suggests that the CDO is

a link between the administration and members of the campus community on matters of diversity. Reporting to the president or provost, working with deans, hearing faculty and staff concerns, including students in the diversity conversation and influencing the campus strategic plan creates many opportunities for the CDO to use persuasive tactics. Research shows that CDOs use persuasion to transform campus members about the importance for institutional diversity (Green, 2008). The person leading as the CDO brings a specific background, through process, gender, race, and other factor that is their).

Within any given educational context there is a transaction between the educator and the learner that is impacted by one's positionality (Misawa, 2010). The positionality of a CDO influences their ability to do their work as a diversity officer, but it also impacts the learning that occurs (positive or negative). The context is a college or university campus environment with a unique history with constituents who all perceive diversity, and the CDO from a perspective based on his or her positionality. That positionality will also influence how well a CDO is able to navigate the terrains of practice to leverage power and authority. According to Nixon (2010), racial minorities and women account for the majority of CDOs who work in higher education contexts (predominantly White institutions) where there is a historical resistance to diversity. Given the context of predominantly White institutions, and the nature of diversity work "it is relevant to examine how social identities (positionality) may impact [a CDOs] understanding and experience of their role" (Nixon, 2010, p. 33).

Competency for Diversity Work

Competency refers to the extent a professional is effective in doing their day-to-day work. Hays-Thomas, Bowen and Boudreaux (2012) discuss levels of competency useful for professional diversity officers on Table 1. Most notable is the similar and unique responsibilities

for diversity officers at each level of higher education, including entry level practitioners, middle managers, and senior diversity officers. CDOs are responsible for being change agents, leveraging status and influence, and having political savvy to function effectively in their role at an institutional level (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007).

Williams and Wade-Golden (2007) suggest seven areas of competency practices for a successful CDO that include: (a) a technical mastery of diversity issues; (b) being politically savvy; (c) the ability to cultivate a common vision; (d) in-depth perspective of organizational change; (e) sophisticated relational abilities; (f) an understanding of higher education culture; and (g) being results oriented. Institutions must also make a commitment from the presidential level for resources, support, and visibility to complement the attributes that a senior diversity officer offers. Green's (2008) findings support Williams and Wade-Golden's claim of what it means to be a well-prepared CDO and those institutions must make appropriate adjustments for success.

Pittard (2010) discovered that a well-prepared CDO would possess the attributes offered by Williams and Wade-Golden, but would also: (a) be a visionary leader; (b) be a flexible and active listener; (c) have strong administrative skills (e.g., assessment, negotiation); and (d) be able to make tough and difficult decisions. Their role as a cabinet-level official places CDOs in complex situations that will impact multiple constituents of the institution; hence being well-prepared developing competencies for success is essential (Pittard, 2010; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2006). The concept of being a well-prepared CDO is connected to functioning effectively as the senior executive responsible for diversity at the institutional level.

Table 1

Values, Knowledge, and Skills for Effective Diversity Officers (Adapted from Hays-Thomas, Bowen, and Boudreaux, 2012)

<i>Values, Skills, Knowledge</i>	Entry-Level Diversity Officer (<i>Coordinator</i>)	Middle Manager Diversity Officer (<i>Director</i>)	Senior/Executive Diversity Officer (<i>Chief Div. officer</i>)
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity • Positive outlook • Being open to ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity • Humility • Flexible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity • Humility • <i>Open to try new things</i>
Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-aware • Use of policy and law • Understand power dynamics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-aware • Techniques for managing diversity • Macro viewpoint • Organizational structure • Organizational policies • Relevant laws 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-aware • <i>Benefits of diversity</i> • <i>Diversity plan</i> • Macro viewpoint • Organizational structure • Organizational policies • Relevant laws
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen actively • Empathy • Proper use of line authority • Useful communication • Self-monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen actively • Empathy • Investigative skills • Appropriate communication • Implementing corrective action • Ability to relate • Create learning outcomes • Persuasion • Conflict resolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen actively • Empathy • <i>Modeling diversity behaviors</i> • <i>Tact</i> • <i>Ability to anticipate problems</i>

Diversity officers at each level of the organization will rely on previous experiences and new learning by being in practice (Schön, 1987). Learning that occurs outside of a classroom space is necessary given that each CDO enters the profession with different academic and professional training (Green, 2008; Maltbia, 2001; Nixon, 2013). Entry-level or middle manager diversity officers are likely to have academic training and a background in education, counseling, student affairs, social work, or a closely-related field. The CDO position is an executive level position with unique competencies. Individuals tend to enter the CDO role with educational, legal, corporate, or non-profit backgrounds. The CDO profession is absent a common body of knowledge, although there is a common purpose as evident by the NADOHE. A well-prepared CDO in higher education would possess, or develop competencies most beneficial for being an effective professional.

Competencies unique to CDOs include an openness to try new things, knowing the benefits of diversity, knowledge of a diversity plan, the ability to model diversity behaviors, being tactful, and the foresight to anticipate problems (Hays-Thomas, Bowen, & Boudreaux, 2012). According to Table 1 the CDO shares values, knowledge, and skills with entry-level and middle managers, but there are unique functions required of professionals who work on the executive level. Williams and Wade-Golden (2007) add to the list of competencies that are unique to CDOs, suggesting being a change agent on campus and relying upon status and influence to encourage and drive change are important attributes. This study will understand the process that CDOs use to learn competencies that render them effective senior diversity officers.

Influence, Power, and Authority

Research about race, gender and class in higher education exists, however, the literature on the impact of diversity, and diversity executives in higher education is still emerging. Aguirre

and Martinez (2006) state that there is little agreement about what constitutes effective leadership in higher education and less of an agreement with regard to leadership and goal setting for diversity initiatives. Leadership practices that view diversity as an opportunity will seek change on campus through transformational approaches within a network of constituents (Aguirre & Martinez, 2006). Kezar, Eckel, Contreras-McGavin and Quaye (2008) found that leaders who had success with advancing campus diversity through change saw themselves at the center of a network of builders as opposed to a hierarchal role. Some advantages of being at the center of the network included: (a) involving many people on campus to get support and buy-in for the process; (b) a network that helped to capture key knowledge from various stakeholders; and (c) the creation of a network early in the process to build support and develop coalitions among various stakeholders (Kezar, Eckel, Contreras-McGavin & Quaye, 2008). Campus leadership for diversity involves interpersonal interactions with campus executives to garner support to establish and advance diversity agendas.

Presidents are involved with leadership efforts to advance campus diversity because they are recognized as the chief executive for college and university campuses. They are highly important for advancing the campus diversity agenda because of their hierarchal role within the organization (Evans & Chun, 2007; Green, 2008; Kezar, 2008; Kreitz, 2008). Campus presidents are necessary (Kezar, 2008) to the campus diversity agenda as they work with trustees, get involved with efforts to transforming the campus, link diversity efforts to the strategic plan, and utilize the leverage they have as a campus leader. In their study, Kezar et al. (2008) found that campus presidents leveraged their position to enlist ideas, support and allocate resources for the advancement of diversity efforts. In essence, presidents utilize different

strategies to advance campus diversity, but they can often make decisions and tap into networks that are unique to his or her role as the institution's CEO.

Structural Models for Institutional Diversity

Early efforts to infuse diversity into higher education resulted in temporary and isolated approaches to pacify minorities (Nixon, 2013). Some college and university presidents hired CDOs to be proactive and potentially more intentional about diversity. The position of the CDO in the organizational structure sends a powerful message to the campus community about the importance of institutional diversity (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). Some campuses have hybrid models – attaching diversity leadership responsibilities to an existing campus executive – an approach not advantageous to the campus community. Hiring a CDO demonstrates a commitment, but institutions have options for creating the archetype for a new leadership role. Williams and Wade-Golden (2007) suggest three organizational archetypes: the collaborative officer model; the unit-based model; and the portfolio divisional model that have guided how diversity has been approached by colleges and universities.

The collaborative officer model is the most common model used in higher education (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). According to Williams and Wade-Golden (2007), it is often that CDOs operating within this model rely heavily on senior leaders, charisma and relationships in the absence of formal authority or oversight for a large budget. The unit-based model is concerned more with lateral coordination and campus relationships. A CDO working within this model will have some staff and financial resources to tackle institutional issues and utilize their position as leverage. The portfolio divisional model is used the least of the three approaches, but it is the most expansive structure. CDOs working in this structure still consult with senior executives for support, still benefit from lateral relationships, and absorb existing departments

doing diversity related work in silos. Under this structure the CDO would provide leadership for offices like multicultural and minority affairs, international affairs, student support services, cultural centers, ethnic and gender studies, retention and pipeline affairs, community outreach, training and development, equity and compliance and diversity research affairs (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). The latter of the three structures is the most political during its conception as leaders seek to align these units. Presidents have to decide how to best build the capacity of the CDO role without creating more conflict by moving offices from one division to another. Senior leadership needs to carefully structure the CDO while avoiding political backlash and remembering the institutional needs. So many campus leaders attempt to carbon copy other campuses, which is not helpful due to the cultural factors that shape institutional culture.

Every CDO in higher education has a different academic training and professional portfolio. There are no formal academic training programs to prepare CDOs for practice; therefore, they approach practical issues from their frame of reference based on their academic training (Pittard, 2010). The NADOHE organization is a resource to CDOs for networking and to discuss useful practices; however, learning how to develop or enhance competencies is equally important. Continuing professional education (CPE) is used to guide professionals to develop the necessary capacities to improve practice (Cervero, 2000). Traditional forms of education in the form of lectures or approaches that do not account for the learners' needs fall short of preparing professionals (Cervero, 2000). The majority of learning for professionals continues in practice, and CDOs are not immune to a continuous flow for developing professionally.

Professional Development and Ongoing Education

Professionals participate in continuing professional education to improve their ability to function with competence. Continuing professional education (CPE) also responds to the

professions and regulatory groups requiring licenses, certification, or expanded practical knowledge for practitioners (Queeny, 2000). Professional development is positively influenced if CPE is designed in concert with the contextual realities and needs of individual practitioners (Queeny). Prior to CPE, professionals relied on societies or apprenticeship type activities to develop professional competencies (Houle, 1980; Mott, 2000). Modern approaches to continuing professional education are presented with the learners needs in mind and by a number of providers. Collaboration among providers of CPE working with learners and formal education agencies (universities) modernizes how activities are developed for professional development (Cervero, 2000; Daley, 2000). Daley (2000) states that professionals who engage with CPE programs are exposed to new information to add to existing knowledge; essentially, participating in professional development.

Lifelong learning beyond the classroom is essential for professionals to expand practical knowledge (Cervero, 2000; Mott, 2000). Houle (1980) advocates for ongoing education that reaches beyond content specialization, which means professionals are competent even when confronted with uncommon situations. Continuing professional development from educational sources provides meaningful learning that help practitioners construct the knowledge used for learning moments (Mott, 2000). Professional development should be learner focused and combine formal content knowledge and practical workplace learning to form a well-developed competency for practice (Cervero, 1988). In fact, Houle's model explains a process of professional learning that begins with introductory education with a form of content specialization, preservice education, licensure of certification, and continued education. The research and articles overwhelmingly prove that each CDO has a different content area and most of their training has been in their academic discipline. Research about CDOs is absent of

discussions about licensure or certification, but there are discussions about performing as a CDO in higher education and strategies towards competency development. The NADOHE has been noted as the organ for professional networks and connections. Continued professional development through learning is the focus of this study, focusing on the process of how CDOs learn competencies. According to Houle, the individual practitioner (in this case the CDO) is a reliable provider of continued professional education that involves modes of learning.

Professionals should become researchers of their respective practice by developing a foundation of theoretical and practical knowledge to inform their learning (Mott, 2000). Continuing professional education should provide activities that foster knowledge construction to help develop professionals towards being more competent. The NADOHE is the professional association for CDOs as one source of learning, but the knowledge constructed from practice is rarely acknowledged. The three adult learning theories, informal and incidental, workplace learning, and experiential theories frame how the concept of professional learning will be discussed in this study.

Professional Learning

Professional learning refers to the process of developing competencies to be an effective practitioner (Daley, 2000). Learning is contrasted from education because the individual (learner) is responsible for making information meaningful, and in this case CDOs translate current and prior experiences into meaningful knowledge. Professional learning is sometimes confused with names such as in-service education, staff development, human resource development, and professional development; nevertheless, each strategy contributes to how professionals learn (Campoli, 2011). Critics argue that in-service trainings and similar forms of education attempt to foster learning, but lack consideration for the learner (Dollansky, 1998;

Reitzug, 2002; Zepeda, 2003). In-service trainings are seen ineffective because professionals are often not involved in the process of developing the curriculum, and training is perceived as a forced process onto the employee. Learning as a professional has evolved since in-service education to a more adult education and learning approach that considers context and needs of the learner.

Reitzug (2002) states there are five modern forms of professional learning – training, contextual, networks, developmental, and coaching. Training for professionals is the most used form for professional learning needs, and it includes presentations, workshops, and activities by educational providers – what Bierema (1996) refers to as canned activities. Classic approaches like training or educational presentations do not account for the unique details to facilitate learning for professionals. The contextual form refers to learning from the workplace where situations occur in real time. Contextual learning is significant because it captures details that are embedded in the actual work environment (Mott, 2000). Networking with other professionals who share common experiences is another form of professional learning. Fenwick (2008) suggests that networks facilitate learning as a process of sharing ideas and practical knowledge that has been effective in other situations. Networks are formed organically or through professional associations that also provide professional development activities. Other providers like colleges and universities, private agencies, and online resources offer professional development opportunities. Cervero (1998, 2001) suggests the overall goal of professional development activities should be focused on helping individuals to be effective practitioners. The improvement of professional practice is often the outcome of the ability to make meaning of new knowledge, connect it with existing knowledge, and construct additional competencies (Daley, 2000). Finally, coaching or mentoring facilitates learning in such a way that a veteran

professional or knowledgeable confidant imparts useful information upon a less seasoned practitioner. Mathibe (2007) discovered that coaching and mentoring occurs on or off the job, and it can vary in frequency, as long as the less seasoned professional learns from the encounters.

Combinations of experiences that come together for professionals to make meaning are moments that translate into opportunities for learning. Professional learning is optimal when individual attributes, key experiences, and environmental factors intersect (Sheckley, Kehrhahn, Bell, & Grenier, 2008). Critics of older forms of professional development like in-service activities argue that these approaches fail to account for the needs of the professional who is the learner (Reitzug, 2002). Archaic forms of professional development activities also are absent of contextual (workplace) occurrences. Cervero (1988) calls for an integrated approach to professional learning by incorporating actual experiences that occur within the context of work with professional development activities. The information source provides multiple ways for CDOs to consult for developing professionally, and described by Daley (2000), as creating a mosaic of knowledge. The individual learner (in this case the CDO) is responsible for identifying learning needs and accessing the appropriate educational resources to learn. Key experiences range from professional development type activities and on the job moments that are translated into meaningful learning opportunities. The environmental factors involve feedback from peers and supervisors, organizational support and inhibition, and resources available for self-directed learning.

A shift is occurring that conceptualizes professional learning as a workplace issue rather than a classroom concern (Sheckley, Kehrhahn, Bell & Grenier, 2008). An emerging model presented by Sheckley, Lehrhahn, Bell & Grenier (2008) suggests that key experiences, individual attributes, and environmental affordances work together for optimal professional

learning. The model is similar to Reitzug's model with modifications that have compartmentalized the forms into three guiding factors. Key experiences refer to the context of work, in addition to current and past experiences that influence learning. Individual attributes describe an assessment of the learner's current knowledge along with what is needed, motivation of the learner to learn, and planning a process for learning. Environmental affordances refer to feedback, support, and inhibitors to learning, which impact the access and encouragement to develop professionally. Figure 1 is an illustration of the model to show how the three factors integrate for the most beneficial learning.

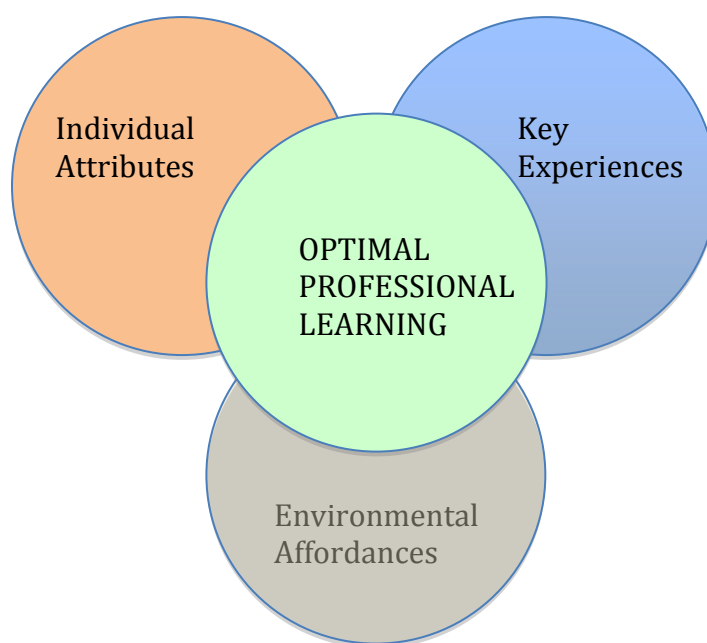


Figure 1. Trio model of adult professional learning. (Sheckley, B., Kehrhahn, M., Bell, A., & Grenier, R, 2008).

The model offered by Sheckley et al. further validates the importance of multiple variables necessary to foster professional learning, which is in contrast to the traditional approaches like in-service training activities. Each circle represents factors combined equal

professional learning for the purposes of this study. Figure 2 illustrates how the model is used to frame this study to understand how professional learning is discussed. All of the circles have similar importance and none have dominance over the other.

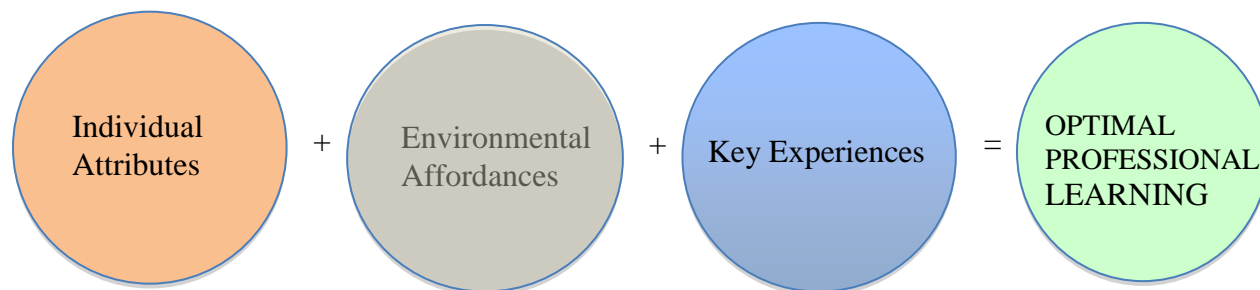


Figure 2. Adapted Trio model of adult professional learning. (Sheckley, B., Kehrhaan, M., Bell, A., & Grenier, R, 2008).

Adult education is an academic field with a group of scholars who investigate how professionals construct the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to function each day. Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) describe adult learning as a process where adults develop new habits or behaviors, and that individuals can add to current knowledge. Schön (1987) states that professional knowledge or competency is essential to practitioners' abilities to be effective in practice. Competencies unique to CDOs in higher education are influenced with constituents and members of the president's cabinet, knowledge of diversity issues, diplomacy to seek change on campus, and strategic planning abilities (Green, 2008; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007). The process of learning diversity competencies is developmental, and it involves the context or the social system in which the learning is applied (Cox & Beale, 1997). Figure 2 is an illustration of Cox and Beale's (1997) developmental model to explain the process of learning that is most useful for diversity officers. Cox and Beale's developmental process used in combination with Hays-Thomas, Bowen, and Boudreaux (2012) forms a template for

understanding the process of learning for CDOs from an adult education and learning perspective. The model begins with awareness where the diversity professional recognizes the benefits of diversity, and acknowledges the need for learning. Acquiring knowledge is the second phase known as understanding. Next, the action phase is working to change behaviors to help advance the overall cause for stronger diversity. Finally, the cycle leads to a new awareness that either results in the learning that occurs (new or updated competencies).

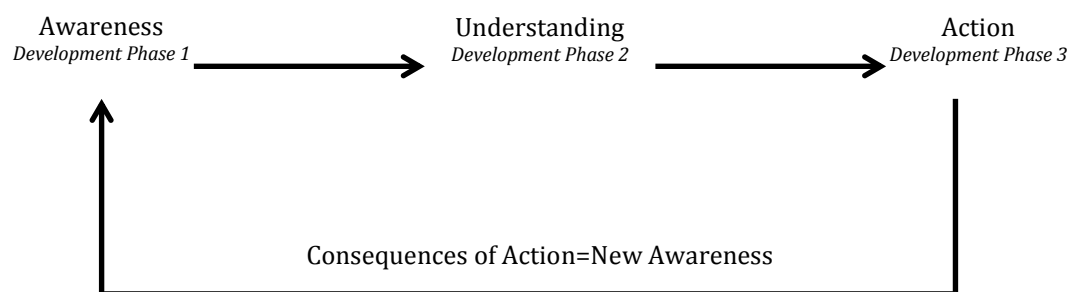


Figure 3. Process of learning diversity competence model. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. From *Developing competency to manage diversity* (p. 5), Copyright 1997 by Taylor Cox, Jr., and Ruby L. Beale. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco, CA. All rights reserved. www.bkconnection.com

The framework used to conceptualize professional learning for this study is based on adult learning theories. Informal and incidental learning, experiential learning, and workplace learning theories are used to frame how I will interpret CDOs professional learning. Each theory is described below along with details why each one contributes to the model for conceptualizing professional learning.

Informal and Incidental Learning

An adult learning theoretical framework used to develop the foundation for this study is informal and incidental learning. Marsick and Watkins (2001) describe informal and incidental learning as the heart of adult education and learning. Both informal and incidental methods are the most common platform for adults to learn, especially in professional contexts (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). To further explain the differences of formal, informal, and incidental learning, Marsick and Watkins (1990) proclaim:

Formal learning is generally institutionally sponsored, classroom based, and highly structured. Informal learning, a category that includes incidental learning, may occur in institutions, but it is not typically classroom-based or highly structured, and control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner. Incidental learning is defined as a byproduct of some other activity, such as task accomplishment, interpersonal interaction, sensing the organizational culture, trial-and-error experimentation, or even formal learning. (p. 12)

Informal and incidental learning often occur without the learner actually recognizing that it (the learning) is occurring. Informal learning can occur in almost any context with the intention that knowledge will be gained through self-directed learning, networking, coaching, and mentoring (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Incidental learning is an unintentional occurrence of a conversation, encounter with a memory, or any sort of occurrence that leads to new knowledge (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). When incidental learning occurs it is the result of an “ah-ha” moment or unconsciously from an encounter (e.g., conversation with another person, watching a movie). Marsick and Watkins’ model of informal and incidental learning is a nonlinear approach to understanding the process of making knowledge meaningful. The learners’ background and

the context of the learning are key components to the model, as both inform how meaningful the information is translated into useable knowledge. Marsick and Watkins explain the importance of the learner and the context:

Because informal and incidental learning are unstructured, it is easy to become trapped by blind spots about one's own needs, assumptions, and values that influence the way people frame a situation, and by misperceptions about one's own responsibility when errors occur. When people learn in families, groups, workplaces, or other social settings, their interpretation of a situation and consequent actions are highly influenced by social and cultural norms of others. (p. 31)

Informal and incidental learning theory is an underpinning of this study to inform the discussion on the process of learning for CDOs. In the absence of formal education CDOs have to rely on how to be effective diversity officers through other forms of learning. Informal and incidental learning theory provides a framework to understand the process of learning informally through unstructured programs like professional development seminars. Additionally, participation in professional associations like (NADOHE offer opportunities for learning. Professional associations also provide spaces for professionals to network with others who encounter similar issues. Networking is another potential learning opportunity where CDOs can hear the successes and challenges that colleagues encounter. Informal learning is the byproduct of professional associations and networking, yet incidental learning is also taking place. Incidental learning offers a framework to understand the process of learning for CDOs as they unconsciously learn through vicarious encounters like conversations with mentors, or interacting with peers who are CDOs at other institutions. Informal and incidental learning highlights the

importance of the learner developing knowledge outside of the classroom, however there are additional experiences contributing to the process of learning.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is another theory used to frame this study. Dewey (1938) is considered one of the early scholars of experience and learning who noted the relationship between experience and education. In order for an experience to inform learning it must display principles of continuity and interaction (Dewey, 1938). Continuity refers to the connection of new learning to old or existing knowledge, in addition to understanding the future implications (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). The interaction principle refers to the learner's interaction with an experience in concert with a given context or environment (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Dewey's early theory is considered the beginning of the discussion about experience and learning, and it is used due to the consideration for the learners' involvement in concert with the context of an experience. Kolb (1984) moves the conversation about experience and learning to a model supported by a process based on four occurrences.

The development of a model to conceptualize how experience translates into learning is offered in a four-part approach by Kolb (1984). According to Kolb (1984) an experience is considered learning when the process involves a concrete experience, reflection on the experience, developing an abstract conceptualization, and practical experimentation. A concrete experience is the exposure to a new stimulus or a situation that is new for the learner (the CDO). Next, the learner cognitively digests the concrete experience through meaning making or reflecting on the encounter. The learner should then be able to develop untested concepts by analyzing the overall experience, and the factors involved as well. Finally, the learner is able to apply the new knowledge by testing it (a new concept or theory) in actual practice. While Kolb

is noted for his inaugural model it comes with criticism about the absence of context that is a major component of the experience itself, hence it demonstrates a disconnection from Dewey's early assertion.

Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) posit the different theoretical approaches to discuss experiential learning in response to Kolb's model. Kolb's model is considered a constructivist approach because it views the learning process as the learner adding to existing knowledge (constructing a new approach for the learner). Jarvis's (1987) approach is considered a constructivist approach for similar reasons, and critical of Kolb for not including context. The learner brings a unique background to situations that impacts how an experience is received and how the meaning making process is influenced (Jarvis, 2001). According to Jarvis, two main types of learning from experience are nonreflective learning (repeating an experience or doing what is told), and reflective learning (intentionally interacting and thinking of practice as it is happening and following the occurrence). Other researchers have supported the use of context in experiential learning, and also included factors such as the learners' history, abilities, and emotions (Boud & Walker, 1991; Usher, Bryant, & Johnston, 1997). Boud and Walker (1991) acknowledge the holistic learner in the process of learning from experience. Working through the positive and negative emotions is a core issue for actual learning to occur, essentially, placing negative feelings aside to consciously digest new information (Boud & Walker, 1991). Usher, Bryant, and Johnston (1997) support Kolb, Jarvis, and Boud and Walker, but suggest learning is an ongoing process between the learner and the experience. The relationship between experience and learning is much more than a moment. Rather, it is a powerful interactive process that leads to new knowledge based on the holistic learner and the environment (Usher, Bryant, & Johnston). Though many theoretical approaches exist, the goal is for the learner to interact with

an experience in such a way that all factors considered lead to a conscious, well-informed process of learning.

Experiential learning theory is a framework used for this study because it forms a foundation to discuss how CDOs interact with professional encounters in a specific context (institutions of higher education). Research about CDOs and experiential learning are unfounded, but there are empirical studies that explore professionals and experience. Professionals have relied on experience as a source for learning to enhance the theory learned in classroom settings (Zorga, 2002). Experiential learning has been a strategic learning tool for counselors, teachers, psychologists, social workers, and medical professionals to learn new competencies or existing ones (Maudsley & Strivens, 2002; Zorga, 2002). Humphrey (2007) and Harrison (2008) both utilize experiential learning theory to frame their research about professionals. Humphrey's study about African-American principals found that experiential learning was a combination of the learner's background (cultural and educational background) and contextual factors (school setting, politics) that yielded useful learning to help African-American male principals develop professional competencies. Harrison's study highlights how African-American pastors learn on the job and also rely on past encounters to learn. Learning was based on the expectations of the church members, environmental factors exclusive to a church, and the day-to-day activities that informed the pastor of their role (Harrison, 2008). Research about experiential learning provides evidence of its effectiveness if the learner is conscious of the contextual issues and individual factors that shape the process of learning.

Workplace Learning

Workplace learning is another adult learning theory that will be used to frame this study. The concept of workplace learning, once called acquisition, has gained more attention among

adult education researchers (Fenwick, 2001, 2008, 2012). Learning in the workplace was perceived by employers as a way to improve workers' performance to improve production or profits (Fenwick, 2008). A modern perception of learning in the workplace considers the individual learner and the collective members of the workplace. Workplace learning is sometimes confused or used to describe informal learning, which is an incorrect connection. Billett (2002) states that workplaces are spaces for intentional activities with a focused and structured environment, as opposed to informal learning that suggests an unstructured approach. According to Fenwick:

Workplace can be an organization, a Website, a kitchen table, even a car. Work varies widely across public, private, and not-for-profit sectors, and among activities of tradesworkers, managers, self-employed professionals, farmers, and domestic workers. Workplace learning refers to relations and dynamics among individual actors and collectives. (p. 19)

Two emerging perspectives permeate the literature about workplace learning. The competing perspectives situate workplace learning as a benefit to the organization versus benefiting the individual (Fenwick, 2008). This study approaches workplace learning as an individual responsibility that yields learning to foster the effective practice of CDOs in higher education contexts. Mott (2000) reinforces the importance of workplace learning by suggesting the growth in professionals who engage with continuing professional education. Houle (1980) advocates for workplace learning for professionals that complements formal or other approaches to professional learning. Learning in the workplace is equally important to professionals because the context is included as a major factor. The factors inherent in a context or environment

impact how a circumstance is experienced by CDOs, which frames the learning process. From this perspective learning is used as a lifelong continuous process (Hager, 2004).

The theory of workplace learning is a more practical approach rather than a theoretical analysis (Harrison, 2010). According to Merriam (2008), workplace learning theory has a broad approach to understanding learning for professionals, and it occurs in multiple environments. Workplace learning is used for this study to understand the day-to-day nuances that are the details of the learning process. Each CDO will be working in a unique college or university with power issues, competing ideologies, and influential individuals who have the perception of diversity on campus. While informal and incidental learning, and experiential learning both capture the essence of the CDOs learning process, the theory of workplace learning intends to seek a deeper understanding of in-depth details. Harrison (2008) found that workplace learning provided learning to African-American pastors about their role or art of being a pastor. Additionally, Harrison's findings suggest that the workplace provided an experience directly connect to "being a pastor" (p. 141). Merriam suggests workplace learning is associated with understanding the process of learning in a specific context; essentially understanding how in the moment factors impact learning for CDOs in higher education.

Situated cognition is another way to understand workplace learning, referring to learning with a particular context used to frame the environment (the setting). Learning is a social activity because it is an interactive process between adults and a situation (Lave, 88). According to Lave and Wenger (1991) situated cognition (situated learning) describes the act of adults learning in a social setting with others, along with tools provided to effectively practice in the respective environment. The process of learning with the components involved in the context, or "the stage" and parts of the situation, are involved in the framework with situated cognition

involved as a framework. Daley (2000) suggests four interrelated components to situated cognition: (a) learning is situated in the context of practice (the environment/workplace); (b) knowledge transfer connected to similar occurrences; (c) learning becomes a social phenomenon; and (d) prior knowledge is involved in the process of learning. What Daley is stating indicates the importance of the learning and the context in the enterprise of an authentic meaning making experience. The context of practice offers unique situation and tools that influence the learners meaning making into something that is practical, as opposed to theory generated in a classroom (Cervero, 1988; Daley, 2000).

Situated cognition is a vital component to frame this study because “the physical and social experiences and situations in which learners find themselves and the tools they use...are integral to the entire learning process” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 178). The concept of situated cognition complements both the Trio Model (Figure 1) and the Process of Learning Diversity Competence Model (Figure 2), because the learning is occurring within a specific context (environment – a predominantly White institution). Situated cognition complements workplace learning because the social environment where CDOs must negotiate an environment that presents challenges and issues with their work. To understand how learning occurs in the context of a predominantly White institution, workplace learning will be discussed using situated cognition as a theoretical framework.

Ideal professional learning occurs when individual traits, key experiences, and environmental circumstances converge for an individual learner (Sheckley, Kehrhahn, Bell, & Grenier, 2008). I believe Sheckley et al.’s model is best informed using informal and incidental, experiential learning, and workplace learning theories. Informal and incidental learning occur without the learner actually knowing it is happening. The theory frames helps explain the day-

to-day activities of a CDO and the learning that occurs unknowingly. Experiential learning informs how the professional experiences, both past and current, scaffold the learning for CDOs. Ultimately, the experiences that a CDO bring into their professional portfolio are accessible in practice. Finally, workplace learning captures the context of the environment where the CDO “performs.” Workplace learning theory frames the unseen politics and other day-to-day issues that present successes or challenges encountered by a CDO. Finally, situated cognition is a necessary theory to explain the context in which learning occurs, accounting for the learning and the complex issues and tools connected to the context (the setting where the learning occurs).

Positionality

Positionality has been mentioned throughout the chapter as a way to highlight the individual learners’ learning. Furthermore, positionality is an essential concept for connecting the learner (the CDO) to the context and its influence on learning for senior diversity officers. Sociocultural characteristics of the learner in relationship to the context (higher education) can be framed within a conversation of positionality. The background factors of the CDO, in addition to impact of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, class, and other identifiers of the learner are raised in relationship to learning in the context of higher education is a component of this study. Misawa (2010) discusses the significance of an individuals’ ability to be fluid within an organization, as race, gender, class, etc., afford a person power based on one’s positionality and the response from people in the environment. According to Nixon (2010), a majority of CDOs are professionals of color and they express certain experiences based on their positionality. Additionally, CDOs who are women and of color are in situations that present more challenges based on their positionality (Nixon, 2010). Research suggests that women and people of color experience challenges as a CDO because of their social identities, meaning some

aspect of their positionality presents challenges on campus (Nixon, 2010). Nixon indicates that the unspoken expectation is that CDOs will enter environments that have a culture of dominance by one group (White males for example), and permeate thick power dynamics to change the culture – a task that is very challenging when diversity is unpopular by some. As a result, the CDO has a positionality impacting their ability to be effective change agents.

This study will add to the discussion about CDOs, learning, and context. Literature about learning in context is vast, but this study will connect the learner as a cultural being (positionality) to those concepts. The positionality of the learner is important to this study because it frames how the CDO (as a cultural being) enters a campus to seek change while “learning on the job.” A CDO is expected to facilitate change when they are limited because of their positionality and because diversity is situated as a divisive topic on college and university campuses (the context) (Green, 2008; Nixon, 2010). The question of this study is raised to understand how CDOs learn, given their positionality in environments with thick cultures that present challenges for diversity officers.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the professional learning for Chief Diversity Officers (CDOs) who work at colleges and universities. This study emphasizes the learning of senior diversity officers given the complexities associated with their work and the process of learning as experienced by professionals who are CDOs working in higher education. The review of the literature highlights the growing significance of diversity in higher education, the emergence of the chief diversity officer role in higher education, and professional learning and development strategies as a source to be an effective professional. Diversity has been a growing phenomenon in higher education due to changing demographics and the expansion of a more

interconnected global community. The growth of diversity has impacted higher education institutions to adapt to remain competitive and avoid problematic situations that occur because of insensitive acts on campus. To respond to the call for diversity, many college presidents have hired CDOs to oversee institutional diversity. The charge for CDOs is to manage a diversity portfolio that situates diversity as a value for excellence. Every CDO has a unique educational background in addition to professional experiences. There are no formal training programs to prepare professionals for being senior diversity officers, hence adult education and learning are lenses used throughout this study. Professional learning is framed using adult learning theories that are based on a variety of learning techniques to support the learning process of CDOs for this study. The literature is used to frame how this study will be designed, and how the research process will be informed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the professional learning of Chief Diversity Officers (CDOs) who work in higher education. I used a narrative inquiry research approach to govern the data collection and analysis for this study, using the following research questions:

1. What do CDOs identify as their learning needs?
2. What strategies do CDOs utilize for learning?
3. How do institutional factors inhibit or support CDOs' learning?
4. What is the impact of professional learning for CDOs working in higher education?

This chapter provides details about the design of the study, sample selection, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness. Finally, the chapter closes with a discussion about a pilot study I conducted to understand how CDOs use reflective practice as a strategy for professional learning.

Research Design

Several categories of qualitative approaches are available to researchers based on the design of the study. Creswell (2009) offers five approaches of qualitative research as narrative — phenomenology, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory. Merriam and Associates (2002) identify eight approaches of qualitative research, each approach having a unique focus and outcomes based on different strategic designs (p. 6). The eight approaches are the interpretive qualitative study, a phenomenological study, grounded theory, case study,

ethnographic study, narrative analysis, critical qualitative research, and postmodern research. Regardless of the technique of qualitative research, each approach is expected to scaffold a well-focused study with thorough descriptive results (2002). I selected a qualitative approach for this study to specifically gather descriptive data in the form of narratives (or detailed stories) from CDOs who are performing the day-to-day work as a diversity executive in higher educational contexts.

Qualitative research was used to collect information-rich accounts from actual CDOs working at large research universities. Qualitative research is an in-depth investigation about a specific phenomenon, and is also used to make a hidden reality visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Merriam and Associates (2002) describe qualitative research, stating:

The key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that individuals in interaction with their world socially construct meaning. The world, or reality, is not the fixed, single, agreed upon, or measurable phenomenon that is assumed to be in positivist, quantitative research. Instead, there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality that are in flux and that change over time. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what those interpretations are at a particular point in time and in a particular context. (pp. 3-4)

Each CDO was asked to share stories about their experience through their lens of working in the specific context of higher education. Through my interpretation of each data set, I revealed commonalities that led to layers of codes. After analyzing the codes I developed larger themes to respond to each research question. The themes led to a response to the research questions based on evidence from CDOs working in higher educational contexts.

There are five characteristics common to qualitative research designs (Merriam et al., 2002). The common characteristics dictate the research project that include: (a) demonstrating the meaning people have constructed about their reality; (b) developing the data with the researcher as the primary instrument; (c) documenting the biases of the researcher; (d) emerging data from an inductive analysis process; and (e) developing the findings from richly descriptive data (Merriam et al., 2002). The first characteristic refers to qualitative researchers being interested in portraying a real-world experience of an individual or group of people through their words and images (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Researchers who have specific research questions focus on predetermined research interests to investigate the real-world experience (or lived-reality) of someone or a group of people. The second characteristic of qualitative research is the researcher being the data collection and analysis instrument. The goal is to understand people through words and images, which is why the researcher being the instrument is beneficial to analyzing information (Merriam et al., 2002). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) state the importance of researchers revealing their relationship to the topic, and their biases so that both are factored when readers make sense of an overall study.

A third characteristic of qualitative research is to recognize the researcher's subjectivity and biases that influence the study. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) urge researchers to recognize their background and experiences so that biases can be monitored throughout the research process. Reporting subjectivity and biases should be explained to show how close the researcher is connected to the study. Later in this chapter is a detailed account about my background and experiences to provide the reader a narrative of my relationship in regards to diversity officers, higher education, and the overall study. Qualitative research is an inductive process, which is the fourth characteristic. Patton (2002) states that an inductive design means that the data emerge

from the case being studied. An outcome of analyzing the data closely is an inductive design that yields themes and categories to respond to research questions (Merriam et al.). The rich description of qualitative research is the fifth characteristic. To construct outcomes that explain details about the lived experience of people means that thorough descriptive information is necessary so that I provide the reader a connection to the actual experiences of learning for CDOs who work at large research-intensive universities (Merriam & Simpson, 2000).

According to Merriam et al., rich description is derived from detailed quotes, field notes, and a description of the context with details helps construct the scene or experience for the reader.

Each of the five characteristics was used in this study to ensure that a strong qualitative process permeates the research design.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a research methodology where stories from individuals are used by the researcher to construct findings (or answers to the research questions). Access into the personal experiences of the storyteller (the participant) reveals a depth of information from actual narratives of people involved in a situation (Kramp, 2004). Riessman (1993) states that narrative inquiry is an ordered collection of experiences that is analyzed with a focus on linguistic and contextual factors heavily considered. In fact, a well-designed narrative study has a clear beginning, middle, and end in a format that provides the reader with a direct understanding of what the researcher has interpreted (Merriam & Associates, 2002). My focus on the learning experiences of CDOs who work in a specific context is why narrative inquiry is used for this study. The narratives of CDOs who are at large public research universities were selected because they are often perceived as having more resources and big organizations. The stories of the CDOs in higher education allowed me (the researcher) to uncover how they

navigated the day-to-day terrain of their role as the senior diversity executive. Narratives from each CDO are information-rich and first-hand stories about learning in their respective professional settings.

Researchers who use the narrative inquiry approach are interested in the meaning made through the stories through the voice of each participant. Kramp (2004) offers the following about researchers who use narrative inquiry, stating that, “The researcher who engages in narrative inquiry is interested in determining the meaning of a particular experience or event for the one who had it, and tells about it in a story” (p. 108). Each story is situated within the parameters of a social, cultural, and political context at a particular time (Kramp, 2004). The stories are information-rich when the experiences of the storyteller (the participant) are uncovered. But, narratives are ineffective if the experiences are absent within the stories (Polkinghorne, 2007). The purpose of utilizing narratives for this study was to understand the meanings that CDOs constructed about their learning. I collected 10 narratives so that I would have a wide-range of information to understand the experience of learning for CDOs in higher education contexts.

The researcher is involved in the process of interpreting the meaning with the storyteller. I made meaning with CDOs who told their stories about their learning. Johnson-Bailey (2004) asserts that researchers use narratives to give voice to the participants by focusing on intricacies embedded in a cultural setting (the context). The researcher and participant are both involved with the narratives – the researcher interpreting meaning from the narratives (stories) provided by each participant. A possible limitation of narrative inquiry is the participants’ willingness to provide “deep in-depth” details that are authentic. Johnson-Bailey (2004) writes about an experience of the storyteller limiting what details to include for fear of being judged, or a

possible lack of trust. The differences in educational attainment created an invisible pedestal that eroded the bond between the participants and Johnson-Bailey:

As discussion progressed, with some of the participants referring to their current educational pursuits of community college degrees and teaching certificates, my terminal degree seemed an indicator of middle-class status and I was faced with skeptical inquiries concerning my previously alleged impoverished background.

Class was not easily discussed, and the class differences between [the participant and the researcher] eroded [their] common ground. (p. 132)

The trust and bonds developed through similarities between the researcher and the participant are deemed important in the process of getting informative and detailed stories. For this study CDOs were candid, but surely knew the limits of what not to share regarding details or intricacies of certain stories. I started the conversation by explaining my background along with my connection to this study to gain trust with the participants. Johnson-Bailey (2004) speaks about the insider-outsider status as a researcher, and the importance of developing rapport with participants to develop trust. I approached this study with somewhat of an insider status, yet it is my goal to engage with participants in a manner where trust was developed so that participants would tell deep informative stories.

The most important component of narrative inquiry is the participant who is being interviewed. The participant is the narrator of the story, and should be empowered to share detailed stories about their experiences (Polkinghorne, 2007). Narrative inquiry relies on the story as the unit of analysis; therefore the information and meaning embedded in the stories of participants' is necessary to a sound study (Clarke, 2003). Common characteristics among researchers who have used narrative inquiry as a research design is the process of carefully

collecting participant stories that are used for analysis (Byrd, 2011; Clarke, 2003; Johnson-Bailey, 2004). Narrative inquiry is most useful to illustrate the stories through the voice of someone who provides a first-hand account of a phenomenon. The interview questions were developed to prompt CDOs to “tell me about” or to “describe” the stories. I expected the interview process to support the participants’ abilities to feel comfortable with sharing deep and in-depth detailed stories in order to glean narratives for analysis.

Researchers have used narrative inquiry for multiple studies. Byrd (2011) collected narratives of adults who were leaders in a collegiate faith-based student organization. The study was designed to narrate faith-based formation using the stories of former students who were at one time a leader in a Christian collegiate ministry (Byrd, 2011). Clarke (2003) collected narratives from Black deaf adult learners who are living with hearing impairments. The study of Black deaf adult learning is an example of research where narratives are interpreted to provide voice to a population sometimes rendered invisible (Clarke, 2003). The story of “Cathy” (Johnson-Bailey, 2002) is another example of how narratives are powerful to understanding the lived-experiences of the participant as the narrator. Johnson-Bailey (2002) uses narrative inquiry to share the stories of an adult Black woman who returned to college. All three studies have a common element of insightful stories, which is evidence that narrative inquiry is a research approach that cuts across different types of research. I selected narrative inquiry as the methodology for this study to interpret the experiences of CDOs, because it is a new and emerging profession, and to highlight the voices of professional who may go unseen given the nature of their role.

The decision to utilize narrative inquiry for this study is based on the purpose of interpreting the stories of CDOs. My research questions were designed to capture detailed

narratives about the learning experiences of professionals who are in higher educational work environments. Narratives are stories from CDOs that provide the specific cultural, social, and political details (Kramp, 2004). The interpretation of the stories is strengthened by rich details and descriptions that are revealing (Polikinghorne, 2007). According to Johnson-Bailey's (2004) experience, the participant is more likely to provide rich details and revealing descriptions as the bond and trust develops. Connections and similarities between the participant and the researcher help to get the "deep and detailed" narratives (Johnson-Bailey, 2004). I developed a connection by sharing my background, experience, and research interest with each participant (discussed later in this chapter). My purpose for this research approach was to understand the successes, challenges, and learning of senior diversity executives in higher education, which is a story that is untold.

Sample Selection

Participants interviewed for this study were CDOs who currently work at large research universities. My decision to select large research universities is based on perceptions that: (a) they are often considered flagship institutions (seen as the leading institution for higher education in a region); (b) these are universities that set the "tone" for higher education and research regionally and nationally; and (c) large visible universities have a legacy of discrimination rooted in the use of mandatory Jim Crow laws. I reviewed the institutions' mission statements to validate the research status; seeking those universities that are research intense. Ten CDOs from different large research universities were interviewed using a guide of questions in a narrative inquiry format.

Participants were purposely selected. Purposeful sampling was used to illuminate the most salient information about a particular situation being studied (Patton, 2002; Yin, 1994). To

focus in on a specific unit of analysis using purposeful sampling Patton (2002) offers strategies that plan to use criterion sampling and convenience sampling. Criterion sampling refers to specific characteristics or a “check-list of requirements” a candidate must have to be considered a sample (participant) (Patton, 2002). I selected participants from large research universities because of the many components that make the organization large, and because many are seen as the leading institution for a particular region.

The criteria used to select participants were based on the research purpose. My expectation was to understand how CDOs who work in higher education learn in their role, in a specific context, and with specific parameters (e.g., reporting structure, job title). Each participant had to meet the following criteria to be considered for this study: (a) currently working as a CDO at a large research university in the U.S.; (b) demonstrated administrative experience in higher education; (c) hold the title of chief diversity officer, vice president for diversity, or an equivalent title; and (d) have a direct reporting line to the university president or the provost. The selection of the participants was purposeful, which means I identified specific CDOs who provide the most useful and in-depth information about their professional learning.

I selected CDOs who had a specific title (CDO or equivalent), who report directly to the president or provost, and were currently working at a large research institution of higher education. A direct report to the senior decision-maker is significant because it confirms access that is essential for political leverage, and it is a demonstration of the span of control to infuse diversity across the institution (Williams and Wade-Golden, 2007). Participants had the designation of CDO as a stand-alone title or in conjunction with associate provost, vice president, vice chancellor, or associate vice president title to signify their role as the campus diversity executive. The title is significant as I sought to collect information that was the

authentic experience of senior diversity officers in higher education, as opposed to individuals who are entry level or mid-manager diversity officers at an administrative level (program coordinator, director). For example, I was considered a mid-level diversity officer as the coordinator and campus manager for multicultural affairs at a university in the southeast. In my role as a student affairs multicultural practitioner, I am a “diversity officer” as a percentage of my work involved diversity programs and services for a mid-size student-centered university.

Each participant was purposively selected based on the list of criteria described above to offer a broad spectrum of experiences for the data analysis (Creswell, 2009). Patton (2002) states that purposive sampling is a strategy to gain information-rich sources that was used to construct data that best provides a wide range for the data analysis purposes. I selected up to 10 sites that were: (a) located in the U.S.; (b) had evidence of a senior diversity officer; and (c) self-identified as a large research university. I identified participants intentionally to gather the most information-rich and descriptive data. All of the CDOs selected for the study were e-mailed an invitation to participate in an interview. The email listed information about the study, the requirements for participation, contributions made by participating, and my contact information (Appendices A). A deadline for responding to the initial email was included within a specific period of time with two reminders as needed, in addition to instructions about contact information.

The scheduling process for individual interviews began as soon as I identified 10 CDOs, and remained ongoing until all interviews were concluded. I contacted each participant individually, and then followed instructions given to me to schedule time for an interview. Each participant participated in one interview that lasted up to one and one-half hours. The interview

guide (Appendix C) was developed ahead of time with flexibility for me to ask follow up questions in order to gain further insight about an idea that warranted further details.

Data Collection

Interviews with each Chief Diversity Officer provided the data for this study. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) state that interviews are “used to gather descriptive information in the subjects’ own words” (p. 95). Interview data are important to a qualitative research study because it is intended to be in-depth information from someone who represents a specific situation. An interview with a current CDO at a large research-intense university was one of the data sources. I engaged each participant in an unstructured interview, facilitating a conversation to detailed in-depth narratives (long detailed stories or descriptions). Qualitative interviews can be structured or unstructured based on the research design, and direction of the study (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). A highly structured interview is administered with a specific list of questions developed prior to the interview, and asked during each interview with autonomy to the researcher to ask additional follow-up questions (Merriam & Associates, 2002). A less rigid design is used for an unstructured or semi-structured interview process, leaving autonomy for a researcher to ask follow-up questions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). There are benefits associated with using the semi-structured interview approach for this study. I had autonomy to create more of a conversation to get extensive narratives. Setting the stage for each interview involves a careful process of setting the tone with the interviewee by having a plan, and giving participants the open time to lead the discussion (Kvale, 2007). I asked a combination of prepared and follow-up questions during the interview leaving much time for the interviewee responses. A part of the planning process was developing a list of suggested questions that I used as an interview guide.

Gathering thick descriptive narratives is a high priority so that the reader is able to connect with a situation that is being recreated through words (Patton, 2002). To collect thick (detailed) narratives I invited participants to: (a) share as much information possible with open ended interview questions; (b) collect descriptive field notes throughout the research process; (c) use follow-up questions during the interviews; (d) ask questions that solicit depth and details; and (e) allow silence to leave space for the participants' to share deep intimate, yet relevant information. Open-ended questions encourage the respondent to think back to a situation, and from those thoughts go beyond basic information by adding thorough details and contextual information (Patton, 2002). An example of an open-ended interview question was, "tell me about the most beneficial learning moments you have experienced as a chief diversity officer." Each interview question was designed to collect the most significant information so that I intently focused on interesting points to further investigate. At any point during an interview I had the autonomy as the researcher to ask for clarification (probe), and ask the participant to elaborate on a significant piece of information.

Thick descriptive data are a window inside the unique experiences of individuals, using detailed information to present enough of the situation to create a mental image for the reader (Patton, 2002). Field notes were written during the data collection process to explain moments not captured from audio recordings, and then used during analysis for clarification purposes. I wrote field notes to recall the setting of the interview, observations made during the interview, and other intricacies that could not be captured on the recordings. Patton (2002) describes field notes as a resource for the researcher to use during analysis. Field notes contain observations, short phrases, and other research-worthy information to use for the data analysis process. Data that was collected from each of the participants were analyzed separately and later compared to

derive codes. The multiple codes are preliminary data that were processed from the raw interview data (the transcripts). I used a three-tier coding system to analyze the data for common themes, while also seeking unique nuggets of the data that helped me develop themes. Themes were derived from the think descriptive data after a careful, yet intense data collection and analysis process (2002).

Interviews

Qualitative interviews are sources to gather testimony from individuals to get a direct account of their experience (Kvale, 2007). Each interview question was unstructured (sometimes called open-ended) so that each participant provides in-depth answers with salient details (Patton, 2002). Open-ended questions allowed me to ask the respondent to elaborate on a specific issue or provide supporting details to an incident. I started each interview with a conversation about my background, my interest about the research study, and an overview of the research process. Developing a rapport with my participants created a level of comfort so that the interview was conversational; therefore respondents could find the environment safe and conducive to sharing intimate stories. Next, I reviewed a confidentiality agreement with each participant to confirm the protection of all identifying information. The respondent was given a copy of the consent form that I read aloud, and a signed copy was provided to all parties. I fostered a conversation so participants' felt comfortable sharing detailed information that described a situation so that I could construct a well-developed analysis based on detailed narratives. The most important outcome for each interview was for me to gather descriptive narratives in the participants' own words so that I could develop insights into how CDOs interpret some piece of the world (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). For this study, the CDOs were the

experts about their world in regard to their experience as a diversity executive, and they can best describe their professional learning.

An interview guide was used to ask the most appropriate questions. An interview guide is a list of questions that is often designed prior to the first interview. Interview guides provide consistency to the researcher who will have a list of prepared questions to ask (Patton, 2002). The interview guide I used was a list of the questions that was used for each interview, with autonomy for me to use different follow-up questions that varied per interview. The purpose of an interview guide is to have a planned list of questions to collect the best information in a specific window of time (Patton, 2002). The interview questions are provided in Appendix C.

Follow-up questions were asked so the participant could elaborate on a topic that emerged during the interview and to clarify complex concepts (Patton, 2002). I interviewed two CDOs for a pilot study including follow-up questions used to capture more information for depth and to ensure the information I heard was accurate. From the pilot study experience I learned that Patton (2002) is correct when stating that asking relevant follow-up questions requires listening carefully to what is, and is not said by the interviewee, in addition to paying attention to verbal and non-verbal cues. The interview guide was helpful as it provided a list of relevant questions so that I could remain devoted to listening and taking notes of observations or prominent details during the interviews.

I followed the same interview guide with each participant while also accommodating enough flexibility to be spontaneous. Again, the flexibility of qualitative research provided opportunities for me to make modifications during the data collection process, especially with interview questions. The narrative inquiry approach was selected for this study so that I could analyze the data immediately after an interview (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Information that I

learned from a previous interview was used to modify or add questions to the interview guide to enhance depth of information. When I started the initial interviews I used my learning from the first interview and was able to make changes when I interviewed the second participant and the same with the third participant. Any new or modified questions were added for follow-up questions based on what I learned from each interview.

The interview process started March 2015 at different locations. Four CDOs were interviewed in their offices on their respective campus. The CDOs were interviewed face-to-face using videoconference internet software named Skype. The remaining three CDOs were interviewed at the National Association for Diversity Officers in Higher Education annual conference hosted by the American Council of Education. The participants interviewed at NADOHE met me at a private location in the host hotel in Washington, DC. The interview process concluded May 2015. I reviewed a consent form (Appendix D) with each participant to explain their role as a participant, rights of participation, and the outcomes for participating. Compensation was not provided to the participants. All participants demonstrated their full knowledge and participation in the study by signing the consent form before the interviews started. The participant and I signed two consent forms so that we both had a copy of the document. After the consent forms were signed I started the digital recorder to record the interview.

Two recording devices were used to record and store the data. Two electronic digital recorders were used at each interview, and were transcribed verbatim. The recording started after I read the consent form, ensured that participants understood their rights and safety, and when I felt confident that participants approved of the interview being recorded. The digital recording devices remained in a secure location with me (the researcher) at all times. To

maintain security, the electronic devices were kept in a bag at my home or professional office, and the bag was placed in an unseen hidden location. All of the data were stored in a password-locked file, including any written transcripts or any written documents that could identify a participant or their respective institution. The password and any sensitive information related to the research design were accessible by me, the major professor advising this study, and the methodologist who worked with me during the analysis phase. A paid transcriptionist was hired to transcribe the interviews and was asked to sign an agreement form agreeing to privacy and confidentiality for all aspects of this study. Any information that could identify the participants remained confidential, and I organized the data using names that were not descriptive or traceable, using pseudonyms. After the data were transcribed, I listened to each interview separately while reading the transcripts for accuracy. The electronic recordings will be on file for one year on a storage drive (flash drive disk) that remains at my home or office. Each recording that is stored on my storage device was erased after I reconciled the transcripts with the recordings. Access to password-protected recordings or interviews will be limited to me (the researcher). A methodologist (a faculty member of my dissertation committee) advised me during the data analysis process in partnership with my major professor. A prerequisite of the analysis process was gaining a strong familiarity with each set of the data individually and collectively. I reviewed the literature discussed in Chapter Two to frame my discussion of the findings and also identify unique or new information that contributes to the literature base for the professional learning, adult learning, and CDOs in higher education areas of scholarship.

Data Analysis

All of the data were analyzed individually and later collectively to filter the most useful information. I used the constant comparative technique to review the data. Chase (2008) states

that unlike some other qualitative approaches the narrative analysis approach leads the researcher to read and re-read the narratives to identify the discourse that rise from the data. The voices within the narratives were highlighted while I attended to my voice (researcher bias) during the data collection and analysis processes. There are five analytic lenses guiding narrative analysis: using narrative to organize past experiences, narratives represent a form of doing something, narratives are promoted and limited by contextual factors, narratives are situated in a certain time and location, and the researcher has a view of self being a narrator as they interpret the data. I used the constant comparative technique to identify common themes across all data sets (interviews and documents), using narratives as the source of comparative analysis.

The constant comparative analysis is a technique used in qualitative research designs as a strategy to analyze data at each stage of the design process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Analysis of the first interview started immediately so that I was able to make adjustments that would help me secure strong useful data with subsequent participants. The constant comparison approach gave me autonomy to make decisions about what the data are most relevant along with organizing that into meaningful findings. Important themes often emerge during a qualitative study research process as the data are organized by categories and compared to identify common concepts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). I began analyzing the data as soon as I reviewed college and university websites to identify institutional type, identify the CDO, and to determine how institutional diversity is structured. The coding process began when collected all of the data related to the third site visit, and all necessary documents.

Qualitative Coding

The method for organizing the data started with categorizing information using a coding system. Coding means analyzing then sorting the data with a fine tooth comb into manageable

themes (or categories) that lead to larger themes relevant to the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) discuss the steps to coding as: (a) developing words or narratives with a description of the data parts; (b) identifying common themes that consolidate the descriptions into common themes; and (c) developing coding categories. I wrote detailed field notes with specific words or phrases to describe each decision, and thoughts throughout the coding process.

Each interview was coded separately immediately following the meeting with the participant. I found a location to sit and carefully listen to the data while reviewing my field notes. Field notes are the jottings or phrases that I wrote during the interviews (Kvale, 2008). I closely examined each interview by dissecting the data by lines, sentences, and paragraphs to create labels or codes to organize the information (Patton, 2002). I designed my data analysis approach based on Patton's (2002) view about coding the data that states: (a) carefully sifting through the interviews, notes, and memos to identify patterns and related topics; (b) writing short phrases or words next to relevant words, sentences, and paragraphs as description markers in the raw data, such as interviews, notes, and memos; (c) conducting a second reading of the data collectively, and color-code similar codes; (d) create broader descriptive codes that significantly contribute to the findings; (e) review all of the data to ensure accuracy, and to add necessary data to strengthen the findings; and (f) develop comprehensive themes that group major codes into categories in order to answer the research questions. My data analysis process was organized using a combination of NVivo, spreadsheets, handwritten notes and outlines. Additionally, a panel of graduate faculty members who are knowledgeable in both adult education and diversity work reviewed my research.

After the raw data were transcribed and typed, I made notes on the document in the margin. An original copy of all research documents were filed for reference purposes. Notes

were made using the comment function in addition to track comments throughout the document. An additional document was created during the third phase of the coding process so that I could categorize similar codes into a batch of similar concepts. All of the raw data (interviews of the actual participants without analysis) were stored on my external memory device that remains with me. Pseudonyms were not shared; only the respective participant and I know them.

Trustworthiness

Qualitative research is judged based on its ability to provide the most truthful, and significant data with a limited influence of researcher bias. A qualitative research design is considered trustworthy if the study provides insight that appears truthful based on reality (deMarrais & Lapan, 2004). According to Patton (2002), the extent to which the data can be considered reality is measured by the “credibility of qualitative methods...hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the [researcher] – as well as things going on in a person’s life that might prove a distraction” (p. 14). The extent of a study being credible resides with an understanding of the researcher along with the integrity of the data, meaning the study can be trusted. My research competencies are developing as I learn about narrative inquiry research, and because of practical experience with designing smaller qualitative studies. I completed six qualitative research courses to enhance my data collection and analytical skills, in addition to a course about narrative inquiry. In addition to having hands-on experience as a mid-level diversity officer, and as someone who strongly advocates for diversity in higher education, I am capable of designing a credible study by suspending my judgments and suspicions (positionality), which will be discussed later. Additionally, my research was supervised by a senior research faculty member along with three additional faculty members throughout the process. This section is a discussion about the trustworthiness of my study by describing the

rigor of my design, my position, in addition to outlining the way I perceive (the lens) the study as the researcher.

Strategies to Strengthen Trustworthiness

Validity is the ability of the reader to engage with the findings of a study and determine if the information is accurate or transferable (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). According to Merriam and Simpson (2002) there are two forms of validity for qualitative research – internal and external. Merriam and Associates (2002) believe that one way to recognize a valid study is by comparing the data against popular themes, and personal judgment. I recognize that validity is determined by how well I interpret and report the data with as many details to provide an accurate description. Internal validity determines how close the researcher can be to the context or situation by reading the findings, whereas external validity refers to how the findings of a study can be applied in other situations (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Many studies rely on the reader to interpret the reality as depicted by the data, selecting the point of information most useful as determined by context. I used several strategies to protect the internal and external validity of this study.

I ensured internal validity was used to develop thick-rich descriptive themes. After developing the findings section I completed member checks with each participant to review the list of major themes and portions of the findings as a member check procedure. A member-check is used to further confirm a participant's set of responses, and to reinforce interpretations made about the data (Patton, 2002). Cho and Trent (2006) argue that member checking is crucial because it strengthens accuracy by engaging the interviewee by asking them to verify the data. The member check process is an opportunity for the participants' to verify how accurate I interpreted their information into themes. Each CDO was emailed attachments of the major

themes and different sections of the findings as an additional internal validity strategy. The CDOs were given one week to review the documents to verify the data.

Rich-descriptive data from multiple sources are a product of qualitative research also strengthens internal validity (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Rich (thick) description takes the reader into the situation being described (Patton, 2002). With multiple data sources the data becomes richer from the triangulation of data management process. I had three different sources in addition to notes and memos to use for my multiple data. My sources were purposively selected for the first hand information-rich they have in relationship to the topic. I collected the data that gave me insight into the experience of learning as a professional diversity executive, based on individuals who currently do that type of work. Each CDO shared a unique experience, yet there are common aspects that emerged from the compared data sets. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2003), “qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting under study, rather than the literal consistency across different observations” (p. 36). Patton (2002) adds that case studies usually offer readers pieces of information to apply to their context. Constructing a strong findings chapter from descriptive data are filled with stories about the details and lived experience of learning of CDOs.

The external review team, a committee of four faculty members, added internal validity in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). Merriam and Simpson (2000) suggest the same about external reviewers, but call it peer review. For the purpose of this study I worked closely with a faculty committee who will be external reviewers. My major professor monitored the research process along with the methodologist throughout the data collection and analysis phases. The research proposal was reviewed and approved before I began collecting the data.

Reliability refers to the ability of achieving the same findings if a study is replicated with a similar design (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). The findings of a qualitative study are interpretive or descriptive and derived information rich sources, but small sample sizes make it difficult to generalize the results on a study (Merriam & Associates, 2002). In other words, qualitative research findings help to uncover a phenomenon to get closer to some sense of what is possibly reality. According to Merriam and Simpson (2000), it is useful to refer to reliability as consistency between the findings, and the data collected. I ensured reliability using several strategies. First, I used an audit trail to ensure that the findings aligned with the data that I collected from the participants. An audit trail is a strategy used to enhance reliability by listing specific details about the data collection and analysis procedures. An audit trail explains how the researcher conducted the study with extensive details of how the data are interpreted. In the audit trail I described how decisions were made, or thoughts that I had during the research process. An audit trail is a detailed journal of memos with reflections, ideas, observations, issues, and problems at every step of the data management process (Merriam & Associates, 2002). I dedicated at least 30 minutes prior to and following every research activity to keep every intricate detail about my thoughts, decisions, and adjustments. Another strategy used in qualitative research to ensure reliability was to understand my background and biases as the research instrument.

Subjectivity

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) discuss subjectivity as biases influenced by the opinions, prejudices, and experiences of the researcher – something that must be constantly monitored. A researcher's subjectivity is like a non-removable garment that must be attended to throughout any research process (Peshkin, 1988). For this study I was reminded of the “non-removable

garment” regarding my experiences to avoid inserting a perspective that incorrectly presented the true meanings of the participants. Despite efforts to be objective, Peshkin (1988) argues that the researcher must be conscious of their subjectivity at all phases of the research design. I am transparent about my background in this section to describe my relationship to this study, and to present my position.

I believe diversity should be included in most discussions as organizations develop plans for continued growth. College and university presidents must promote diversity as an institutional value if institutional members are to buy in to the concept. To make diversity an institutional value means positioning resources to weave the issue throughout the cultural fabric to set an expectation. I believe that intentional efforts should be central to the process with leaders who are willing to set priorities. Issues of equity and inclusion go unnoticed if institutional members are given the autonomy to think about diversity. My experience as someone who has worked in the “diversity trenches” led me to recognize how diversity is left out of conversations that impact the institution. Additionally, I am always questioning processes or situations regarding diverse issues like staffing or policy development. It is intriguing to see how much is “swept under the rug” without any regard to equity or inclusion of certain populations.

My opinions about diversity and higher education have developed since 1996 when I was admitted to Georgia Southern University as a freshman. From that moment I found myself developing into someone who would find individual differences valuable, and subconsciously wanting to learn more. At the end of my undergraduate career I was an advocate for underrepresented populations, developing a philosophy of inclusion. The experiences I had with the Multicultural Student Center and Student Government Association were pivotal in my development as a young adult. I discuss more of my background and direct experiences with

diversity in my reflexivity statement; however, the blending of my narratives with those of the participants can become problematic. My experiences as someone who does “diversity work” and as a higher education professional are lenses that could become an opportunity to blend my narrative. To limit or monitor my voice in developing the participants’ narrative means being conscious of our story by sharing our story, which is included in this chapter. Additionally, I asked participants to review excerpts of the data analysis to verify their stories are authentic.

Reflexivity Statement

I am the instrument for the data collection and analysis for this study, meaning that all data and interpretations are subject to my biases (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) remind researchers to be mindful of one’s background when writing narratives, ensuring the researcher is careful to present one’s background as the researcher in the study. The researcher’s reflexivity statement allows the reader to understand through what lens the data are interpreted. My role as a mid-level diversity officer at up to 10 different institutions of higher education has exposed me to the challenges associated with diversity on campus. I had direct experience with the “highs and lows” of diversity on university campuses. My experiences at four different universities have influenced how I see diversity in higher education – as a tool that can be useful, but an area that is not supported with the best resources for success. Additionally, I have conversed with several CDOs during my career and have talked about what it takes to handle diversity at the executive level. My conversations have many times validated my assumptions. The majority of CDOs discussed the challenges of their work of validating the need for diversity, working through politics, and being diplomatic in the face of resistance. My ability to separate my experiences from the research process was most important in developing accurate findings.

Researcher reflexivity (researcher position or positionality) also means to present one's identity so the reader better understands more about the interpretation of the data (Merriam, 2009). I identify as a Black male with semi-liberal views, which influence my thoughts and approach, meaning diversity is a very special topic to me because of personal and professional experiences. My views are situated in a cultural context where I was socialized in a manner unique to who I am as a Black male from southern Georgia. I am the son of two middle-class married parents who raised me to believe in equality for people through practice rather than rhetorical influence. Both of my parents hold Bachelor's degrees from Savannah State University. My educational curiosity can be attributed to my mother who was a public school educator for more than 30 years. She also earned her Master's degree when she was a teacher. My father worked for the U.S. Postal Service as a letter carrier for over 30 years and instilled the value of focus and quality in anything that is presented to us in life. Education was a priority in the home, something I understood later in life. My local community, church, and family were unknowingly partners with my parents as I grew up developing into who I am. I grew up in a majority Black neighborhood, and was bused more than 10 miles to attend elementary and high schools due to districting policies. The middle school I attended was within five miles of my home. I attended college within 45 miles of my hometown where I explored my life and challenged my views.

The majority of my appreciation for diversity can be traced back to my experience at Georgia Southern University. I developed relationships with different people who challenged my thinking inside and outside of classroom spaces. Despite my early resistance to campus involvement, I engaged with the Multicultural Student Center through the minority advisement program (MAP). In Chapter 2 I mention the role of multicultural student administrators, which

is something I can attest to because of my experience. It was the director of the multicultural student center who helped me develop in college, and led me to be involved on campus with the Student Government Association, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Students Together and Not Divided (STAND), and campus committees. Later I enrolled as a graduate student in the higher education administration programs, working as a graduate hall director and later a graduate assistant in the multicultural student center. Since leaving Georgia Southern University, I have worked in multicultural student affairs at The University of Georgia, The Florida State University, and The University of North Georgia. I also served at Morehouse College and The University of Georgia Graduate School as a fundraising officer and graduate enrollment specialist (office of diversity and outreach), respectively. I believe that senior diversity executives are helpful to colleges and universities because it reminds people to think about certain things that may go ignored. Institutional diversity becomes a priority with intentional resources to support the chief diversity officer (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007).

My professional career began when I was a graduate assistant in student affairs at a mid-sized regional university with a diverse campus. I eventually positioned my career to be in multicultural centers following my experience in campus housing. My professional learning has been the result of conferences, networking, and on the job occurrences. For example, my ability to design appropriate diversity education resources is a result of understanding a specific campus culture and what issues are most present. My journey as both an entry-level and mid-level diversity officer has come with challenges as well. At one university there were limited spaces for students of color, and a hidden expectation that these students assimilate. On four different campuses I noticed the gestures of support for diversity, yet diversity and multicultural offices understaffed or underfunded. I have worked in higher education for close to 10 years and have

experienced successes and challenges with diversity work. My knowledge of how universities work helped for me to be descriptive when I wrote the findings for this study. To efficiently analyze and report the data meant reminding myself of the background I brought to the research process.

My background influences how I designed this study and interpret the data. I have been involved with diversity since being involved with the Multicultural Student Center at Georgia Southern University in 1996 as an undergraduate student. Since that experience, my exposure to diversity in higher education continued through graduate school and my first professional experience in 2003. After being hired as an entry-level diversity officer at The University of Georgia in 2003, I continued in the profession, and now have more than 10 years as a higher education profession with at least eight years specifically working in diversity areas. My experiences have influenced my sensitivity to diversity in higher education, and I plan to invoke strategies to monitor my biases. For example, I have had direct experiences with the challenges associated with doing the work of a diversity officer; one being the struggle for sufficient resources (staffing and funding). I have also observed the successes and challenges of professionals who are senior diversity executives at a large research university, and in one case a “revolving-door” associated with the hiring of new CDOs. Reviewing my work throughout the research process, and working closely with my methodologist were strategies I used when monitoring my biases showing up in the findings chapter. The methodologist for this study was a senior faculty member with extensive research analysis experience, who worked closely with me to process the data. I also verified the accuracy of the data by asking participants to analyze certain themes, and make adjustments as needed. An audit trail enabled me to maintain details of the research process that added details or verified my work and thoughts within the study.

My goal was to be transparent by sharing my educational and professional background to present my reflexivity statement or positionality (my background and identity). By sharing my positionality, the reader can better interpret my relationship to the topic along with any of my potential biases that could emerge. The overall goal of discussing my positionality is to help the reader understand my relationship or closeness to any aspect of this study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2008). First, my interest in the concept of diversity started when I was an undergraduate student. My involvement with the multicultural affairs office is where I learned about a diversity career. Working as a diversity educator has been a part of my career, but my experience working with CDOs in corporate America was where the idea for this study emerged. My conversations with corporate CDOs were about making diversity a value, and the challenges associated with that process. I eventually researched the CDO role in higher education to find similarities with some of what I heard, but on an institutional level. My journey and conversations led to this study, and my overall research design to understand how CDOs render themselves effective. My research design was developed when I thought about my interest in diversity, my experiences with CDOs, and my adult education dissertation. When I started researching literature about CDOs working at colleges and universities a list of fewer than 10 articles appeared. My background as a professional at colleges and universities also shaped the research design, as I am knowledgeable about the factors embedded within higher education.

The participant's voice must be presented at all times in qualitative research, and that means being intentional about eliminating my voice when interpreting and presenting the data. Johnson-Bailey (2002) highlights the significance of representing the authentic voice of the participant in the collection and construction of narratives. I expected to have narratives where "I get it" or "really understand what that person means," and these are moments when those

thoughts/feelings and assumptions had to be suspended as a strategy for me to avoid inserting my biases. Additionally, the insider/outsider influence that accompanies the role of “being the research instrument.” Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, and Muhamad (2001) discuss the insider and outsider status as a complex issue that researchers should explore by thinking through their positionality, power, and representation. I was an insider to the population for my study because of the experience of doing diversity work as a program planner, although for students as a mid-manager. Being a person of color may have provided some insider status depending on the participant. At the same time, my outsider status was attributed to my lack of executive level experience, limited role due to my position in the organizational structure, and my professional background compared against a sitting CDO. While I understood my inability to totally eliminate my position it was important to present this section as a reflexivity statement; a strategy to be transparent. Again, I asked all of the participants to review a few pages of the themes, with an abbreviated set of the data, as an additional strategy to ensure accurate interpretation of the data. Finally, through a detail and intentional coding process I expected to arrive at themes that had been carefully thought of and developed from the narratives of actual CDOs.

Pilot Study

I conducted an exploratory qualitative pilot study to develop my research skills, and even learned skills to use when designing this larger study. The purpose of the pilot study was to understand how CDOs used reflection as a source for learning. I used three research questions most significant to guide the pilot study. The first question was what does it mean to be a CDO? The second was how do CDOs describe their role? Finally, how does reflection influence the learning necessary to be an effective CDO?

I designed the pilot study using a basic interpretive qualitative design (Merriam, 2002). My goal was to learn additional qualitative research skills while gaining insight about the population I will use for this dissertation research. Two CDOs currently working at predominantly White institutions in rural universities participated separately in interviews that lasted close to two hours. I visited the campus of one of the CDOs, and met with the other in a local coffee shop. Both of the participants had previous administrative experience prior to becoming a CDO at the current university. They both had prior professional experience in diversity work with medium and large organizations. Participant one was a higher education professional with a student and academic affairs background. The second participant had a background in government work, human resources, and policy analysis. I used a semi-structured interview technique to collect the data. To enhance accuracy of the data I used member-checks to confirm the participant's responses, and to reinforce interpretations made about the data (Patton, 2002).

Eighteen questions were used to create the interview guide (Appendix E). I designed the questions to collect the most detailed responses from the participants. Both of the CDOs seemed at ease and in a safe zone to where they could share sensitive information. One participant even mentioned being extremely candid about a topic during an interview. I recorded both interviews using a digital recorder. The first recorded interview was transcribed within 48 hours after it was completed. I allocated one week per interview to transcribe and briefly analyze each data set. Both transcripts were read four times to code the data for detailed information that would create useful findings. I manually wrote words and notes in the margins of the transcripts to develop a system of organizing my data. Next, the codes were used to develop categories or families of

related data. Finally, I created explanatory themes that captured the best description of the codes.

I analyzed the first set of the data following the initial interview so that changes could be used in the second interview. The constant comparative analysis technique was used to compare the data because it offers autonomy to me (the researcher) for developing the units of analysis (Merriam, 2002). The data from the two participants were compared to uncover the contextually-exclusive perspectives of each participant, seeking common themes throughout the data. According to Kvale (2007) meaning and language are interwoven, yet each concept requires different techniques during the data analyses process. Using an interpretive qualitative approach the researcher coded P1 and P2 interviews separately during the initial analysis stage. A second coding process led to more consistent themes to answer the research questions. The third and fourth processes were used to confirm the codes from the first two analyses.

The findings suggested that reflective practice was a useful source of professional learning for CDOs who work in higher education. First, the participants explained how previous and current work experiences are used for learning. Second, participants discussed how reflection enhanced their skills useful as a diversity executive. Developing key relationships, collaborating with others, and communication with campus partners were key skills that current CDOs learned at some point by reflection on something past, and sometimes more immediate situations.

I used what I learned from the pilot study for my dissertation research. First, being more intentional about wording the questions used to create interview guide was a priority. I learned that being very specific about using the correct words in an order that got the best answer is essential. Second, taking more time before and after the interview was necessary for managing

the overall process. When I interviewed the CDOs for the pilot study I would arrive to set up 15 minutes early. My remaining dissertation research was managed with a different schedule: arrive at least 30 minutes early to prepare, and allocate one hour after the interview to make or review my notes and self-debrief and to take a moment to reflect on the interview process itself. Third, I learned that data analysis is an exhausting process that is detail driven. Sifting through the data while analyzing it deeply took many hours to complete, a process I enjoyed the most about the overall research process. I was fortunate to have experienced the art of analyzing the data, synthesizing the information, and creating themes to answer research questions.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the professional learning for CDOs who work at colleges and universities. This chapter provides details about the design of the study, sample selection, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness. This study was a narrative inquiry approached designed to gather rich, descriptive stories from each participant (Merriam et. al.). Data were derived from interviews with 10 CDOs and the focus of this study was their narratives and the meaning of each. Each interview lasted one and one half hours each. The data analysis process was guided using the narrative analysis and constant comparative techniques. Each interview was analyzed separately then collectively in order to develop codes and themes that answered the research questions. Findings from a pilot study about CDOs utilization of reflective practice as a source of learning in practice were discussed to explain how this larger study emerged.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Ten Chief Diversity Officers (CDO) at large research universities around the United States were selected as the sample for this study. A semi-structured interview protocol was used during each respective interview. The participants were interviewed for approximately one and one half hours. Each interview was recorded, reviewed and transcribed immediately following the session. A narrative analysis method was used to review each interview individually and then the 10 data sets were compared.

The goal was to interview the 10 participants in person; however, distance created a challenge. Six participants were interviewed face-to-face on their campus or at the National Association for Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE) conference hosted in Washington, D.C. (2015). The three participants who were interviewed on campus agreed to meet in their on-campus office. Three participants were interviewed at the NADOHE conference at a private area in the host hotel. Four participants were interviewed using Skype, an online video conference system. All participants interviewed provided their signed consent forms prior to the interview. The participants emailed their signed consent form if Skype was the platform for meeting. I was fortunate to meet face-to-face with each participant either in person or using a videoconference tool. The ability to see facial expressions, body language, and other nuances are the details I captured to help frame my analysis.

Participant Profiles

This section presents the background and experience information about each participant. The information is to provide details to understand the participants and to better understand their lived experience. It also explains the experiences that provoked the participants to develop a lens for diversity work. As discussed in Chapter 2, CDOs come from a variety of backgrounds and that was evident in this study. Three participants were faculty members and entered the role after working on the academic affairs area of the university. Five participants had early experience in the student affairs area, specifically as a leader in multicultural student programming and services. One of the five who had student affairs experience also engages in community where he lives. Only one participant had law experience where government and compliance was the framework for thinking about diversity. All 10 participants had a title that designated a high level of management within the university (e.g., Senior Advisor, Associate Provost, Chief Diversity Officer, etc.).

Table 2 illustrates additional participant demographics followed by the participants' profiles. Five of the participants were women and five were men; a 50% split. All of the participants were Black, which is a 100% rate. Eight of the participants earned a doctoral degree in an educational field, one had a master's degree in education and one earned a law degree. The average age of 49.5 was calculated with information from six participants. The average years in the position of 5.8 years are calculated using information for 10 participants. Table 3 is an illustration of the average age and tenure at their respective university. The table also shows the percentage of men and women participants. The individual working professional title at the university could not be shared due to the risk of revealing the participant.

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Race	Years in Position	Academic Discipline & Degree
Susan	46	Female	Black	4	Doctor of Philosophy – Liberal Arts
Bob	50	Male	Black	5	Doctor of Philosophy – Education
Harry	X	Male	Black	7	Doctor of Philosophy – Education
Gladys	37	Female	Black	2.5	Doctoral candidate – Education
Jane	54	Female	Black	4	Doctor of Philosophy – Education
James	46	Male	Black	2	Master's of Arts – Education
Mary	X	Female	Black	17	Master's of Law – Juris Doctorate
George	50	Male	Black	5	Doctor of Philosophy – Education
Richard	64	Male	Black	8.5	Doctor of Education – Physical Science
Ann	X	Female	Black	3	Doctor of Education – Education

Table 3

Averages

Average Age (Based on 7 CDOs who shared their age)	Average Years as CDO	Gender
49.5	5.8	50% Men; 50% Women

Pseudonyms were selected randomly to mask the identity of the participants. Each pseudonym was selected when a candidate became a participant for the study; therefore the names selected do not relate to participants in any manner. The institutional pseudonyms are letters A-B and have no significance. I selected pseudonyms that would not link back to the participants or their institution.

Susan – University A

Susan arrived to University A to fill an administrative academic position, having earned progressive experience that led to joining the senior administrative ranks after serving several years in similar roles. Susan recognized the concept of diversity due to her own identity as a Black female in addition to her surroundings growing up in a racially tense U.S., and in the south. She realized disparities growing up as a Black female, and eventually when she was an undergraduate. Her connection to diversity can also be linked to her awareness of access issues for Blacks in America. Prior to being appointed to the position full-time, Susan was appointed by the provost of A University to be the interim associate provost and CDO. Susan was reluctant about pursuing the role full-time because she didn't want to feel like the position was a serious challenge (a battle *per se*), but soon realized her approach would be based on her ability to leverage partnerships and provide advocacy for unnoticed diversity issues. Susan served in the CDO role for close to five years and continued to identify opportunities to expand the capacity for diversity at University A.

Bob – University B

Bob's passion for youth development and equity provoked his interest for diversity issues. He was groomed for public service by his parents who served the less fortunate when they were educators. Bob was acquainted with diversity as he began implementing a training program through his own business. He learned about the training program when he noticed someone presenting a diversity workshop. He decided to learn how to do the same trainings. Bob discussed his approach to his work as a CDO. His approach is through advocacy and education as his method for practice. Prior to becoming a CDO Bob managed a cultural center at

another university, and led an early access to college program where he worked with high school students.

Harry – University C

Harry presented a scholarly personality and expressed such through his international and academically grounded experiences. He entered higher education through the student affairs route, starting as a resident assistant as an undergraduate student. He eventually made the rise to the Director of Multicultural Affairs. Previous work in corporate marketing influenced his lens to focus on how to communicate diversity and how to get people engaged. Additional experiences in international affairs, study abroad as a faculty member, and thirst for learning presented him with experiences where he was immersed in different environments that involved diversity work. In his role as the CDO he stays connected to students, faculty, and staff to maintain an understanding for the climate on campus.

Gladys – University D

Gladys is an energetic individual who structured her professional experience in a manner where she would experience diversity in higher education. She was the first to mention critical race theory as a theoretical framework for practice, offering evidence for how individuals perceive diversity work. Gladys learned advocacy from her parents and developed her skill of confrontation as well. Prior to becoming a CDO she did intentional internships while obtaining her Master's degree - one with the CDO and another with the AA/EEO compliance office. Additionally, Gladys had student affairs experience as her entry into higher education, and she gained her additional passion for diversity from her time as a K-12 educator. She also is influenced by her role as a doctoral student in an adult education program.

Jane – University E

Jane is an alumna of the institution where she was the inaugural CDO. She came to higher education after years of professional experience in the corporate and government sectors. She had experience with compliance work through the insurance profession where she conducted fraud investigations. She entered higher education as a teaching assistant, which suggests she had instructional experience with college level students. She is the only CDO to mention certification, which was prompted by her desire to understand the CDO role. She seemed to have challenges grasping the attention of the president and she reports to that office through the chief of staff. Her current situation suggested a need for additional political savvy. Jane also didn't appear to perceive that she is appreciated by her executive-level constituents. Jane had a similar struggle as other participants with engaging her president and provost in the work around institutional diversity.

James – University F

James came into this inaugural CDO role after having served as an Assistant VP for Diversity at another institution. He is the only CDO who had been in a diversity office at another university and as a senior leader. His background in American studies and ethnic relations influenced his practical lens to approach his work, in addition to his time as a young activist student during his undergraduate years. James came from a middle class family and understood how to use his privilege and voice to advocate on campus regarding diversity. He is not afraid to raise issues or “push the envelope” around diversity issues, but in a respectful manner. James entered higher education through student affairs and had served two roles as the Director for Multicultural Services & Programs. Currently, he is one of two participants completing a doctorate degree while serving as a CDO.

Mary – University G

Mary entered the CDO role after being an attorney in the government sector. She initially applied to be university counsel but was offered the CDO role due to her compliance background. She did feel like her deficit was understanding higher education and believed a higher education background would have provided a benefit in doing this work. Mary did not mention a strong student connection and did not talk about engaging with the student population, which is different than other participants. I was interested when she shared her lack of knowledge about Title IX policy, but maybe this is because of the context or culture of higher education. She did mention that she approached her practice more as a practitioner, but the scholarship around law is probably her area for research.

George – University H

George is considered a leader in the CDO profession. He had experience as a leader in the NADOHE group, and led the effort to start a similar group in his state. George began his work as an advocate as a student during the 1970s and continued his approach as a graduate student. He entered diversity work after serving in student affairs and had led two offices as a CDO. George is the inaugural CDO at his current institution and had been engaged in developing a solid plan for institutional diversity. He mentioned the idea of “a body of work” around diversity which is an evolving concept. George mentioned his learning around fundraising, which is common among what participants discuss, in addition to the compliance areas.

Richard – University I

Richard is a scientist who presented a unique personality due to his background. His academic training and career began when he was a post-doctoral student, then later entering the

professoriate. When he was a post-doc there was a program to help recruit professors of color at the institution. As a participant of the recruitment program Richard was hired, and had served in the faculty since the 1980s. He does not have much administrative experience, but discussed his innate ability to get the work completed. He somewhat shunned the concept of training, and the worth of professional development that he had encountered. He entered the CDO role after serving on many committees at the institution, and was “pushed” to be the CDO by many of his colleagues. Richard came from a privileged background, but noticed diversity when he was given an opportunity through a program when he was first hired. Like the other faculty CDOs, Richard mentioned doing work “under the radar to move initiatives with less distractions. As a scientist he developed an understanding for qualitative data, yet relies on the statistics when doing diversity work.

Ann – University J

Ann is in her second role as a CDO, having started doing the CDO work at an institution in the northeast. She had done this work for over a decade, bringing faculty/administration as her experience portfolio. Ann's academic training in educational counseling prepared her to approach people, listen, and be interpersonally connected to her work. She valued receiving feedback that included the feedback of peers, as well as individuals who are impacted by her decisions as the CDO. She felt supported by her president and provost through words and action. It appears that Ann’s understanding of the higher education landscape had prepared her to navigate the enterprise with knowledge of how to implement change, in addition to understanding the value of diversity.

Early Exposure to Diversity Issues

All 10 participants developed an interest in diversity issues at some point during their early personal and/or professional life. Each participant discussed their experience during early life that shaped their lens for diversity work. In their own manner, each participant expressed their interest that prompted their work in diversity, especially within the education profession. One participant mentioned being in school during the 1970s (an era when anti-diversity efforts were prominent nationally) and being an advocate for on-campus equality. Others mentioned living in communities and attending schools where inequities were painfully obvious. Then some discussed an interest in academic areas or historical factors where diversity should be visible. The background of each participant varied in their academic training; a factor that contributed to how each person approached practice.

George, a veteran diversity executive with the title of Vice President, noticed social disparities early in life. He developed awareness about diversity issues in the community where he lived as child. He learned early during childhood that equity was not a value shared in the community. His account of the past suggests that there was not a normal distribution of resources for certain populations. His personal background shaped his lens, impacting how he approaches the CDO role:

I think that my personal background had influenced my work tremendously because being a product of the South where I was first-hand acutely aware of disparities and opportunities all the way through high school and I just can say it....the black kids weren't the ones getting the academic tracks and I look around and I see one of two or three in an algebra or trig class or honors English. So, those things sort of....they're painfully obvious that it wasn't just normal distribution of things. And I've always

thought that we could do better... 'we' (society) could do better. But given the fact that we are the sum result of our experiences as a country....even today, we understand that a lesser is a deliberate, purposeful action to remove the final vestiges of what was, that it continues a long time afterwards and like...this sort of...uptake and the visibility of shooting of black males, that is the last gasp of the old racist regimes of handling the differences between the races using a final conclusion as the way to do it.

George continued to encounter disparities as a college student, only advancing his interest in diversity issues. His student affairs work exposed him to certain issues that illustrated disparities on campus. George became acutely aware of who participated in programs versus certain groups that were absent. He talks about his collegiate experiences that made him aware of disparities:

...I took an assistantship in the division of Student Affairs and worked with the dean of Student Affairs at the institution and Student Life and I was in charge of working with student government and student organizations, things like that to where I really got myself interested in noticing how students emerge into those roles and what they looked like and how those processes didn't appear to be sort of like equally distributed in terms of who got into those things, very definitive pathways to those things...tended to be pretty white. So, I said, 'Wow, what's going on here? We've got some smart black kids here.'so I'd actually served as the first black attorney general in my undergraduate school which was a predominantly white place which was like raising hell, and so I always had that streak in me to figure out these things that appear to be equally distributive...things don't appear to just be natural functions of talent, there were processes in place that said...so pointed in conclusions about who participated, who led,

who was visible and so all of that sort of peaked my interest. I came along at a time when this was pretty high end volume stuff. Being educated as an undergrad in the mid-70s...that was just a hellacious time on campus, there wasn't anything that you didn't question back then and certainly access. Unfortunately, I mean, the '70s really was the time that the nation reacted to the Brown decision in higher education. It wasn't until twenty years, that people started taking this stuff seriously and lawsuits emerged...

Life experiences

Mary, an attorney by academic training, said she was socialized to recognize diversity early in life. She also contributed her skill development to her training to become a lawyer, in addition to life experiences. The experiences along her journey have prepared her for the current CDO role at her institution:

I've been an advocate my entire life. Social justice motivated. Have typically been engaged around the issues that fall naturally into the role that I have. You know, when I graduated from G University, my undergraduate degree...I was working for a union so, again, this natural tendency as an advocate. My human relations experience I know how to bargain, I know how to reach consensus. I had a broad understanding of large organizations, complex organizations...I know from that experience how to communicate across all ranges of persons, places and experiences. So, when I arrived in this space while the understanding of the culture of the academy was part of it, everything else that I'd learned including being trained as a lawyer, you could take all of those things and I think make them applicable to this experience.

Bob, a higher education professional, discussed personal and professional experiences that prepared him for the role. One unique fact about Bob was his involvement with community

outreach as a personal hobby. He developed a different level of sensitivity for diversity issues based on what he witnessed in his local community. Bob noticed systematic issues that impact diversity along his journey:

I've had a very diverse professional life. I just mentioned that youth program. But after that, I was over in Student Affairs, I ran a cultural center, it was like running a mini union and because of that I got to student readings, engagements, social functions, speaking engagements and I was booking and stuff, feeding them, those kinds of things. And then I was in judicial programs and so I got a foot in the trouble side and then I coached, I was a graduate coach and then I was in the psychiatric ward which all prepared me as a CDO to see the fundamental flaws in the system that bring up people from that different strata's whether it's male or female, LGBT disabilities, etc. And so all of that was for the preparation and now I have the scholarship to go with it, I have the personal experience and the professional experience and then I have a national network of subject matter around me and I teach the courses now...

James, an experienced diversity executive and Vice Chancellor, studied American ethnic studies and had also done social justice work. His path had been through minority student affairs, and eventually he became the Assistant Vice President at a previous institution prior to becoming a Vice President. James history of challenging the status quo provided him a foundation to shape how he approaches his practice:

I have an undergraduate degree in American Studies with an emphasis in ethnic relations. So, I've always had certainly an interest in social justice issues. I was very active as an undergraduate student in challenging the institution on things where I thought there might be discrimination or despaired impact for social identity groups. And then I went to

graduate school and decided I wanted to work in a higher education setting. Mainly, I am interested in making sure that underrepresented students, mainly students of color that they had good experiences, I wanted to be a part of helping institutions that made sure that students were having quality experiences while they were on the campus. So, got a Master's degree in higher education administration and after that started working in higher education, first at a private liberal arts college and my job actually as a Director of Student Diversity Programs and services and was really involved and worked in that role. And then after being in that role for three years at a private liberal arts college went to a public liberal arts college and was in that role as a Director of Multicultural Center for four years and then moved on to a research one in overseeing both multicultural affairs and actually admissions for the graduate college at a large research one, And then from there was recruited into central administrator as an Assistant Vice President for Equity and Diversity.

Professionals who become a CDO do so from a variety of professional backgrounds. The participants for this study became a CDO after serving in a faculty or staff position on campus, after having a legal career, involved community engagement, or government work experience. This section described the personal and professional connections that CDOs have to diversity work. The data suggest a direct connection to a personal experience that prompts an awareness of disparity within a community.

Leverage the Benefits

Susan believes that large complex organizations like universities need CDOs to leverage the benefits of diversity. She mentioned the necessity of having a professional to manage the needs of constituents who populate the university.

...we're a large organization you know and that varies there are some that are larger we are complex organizations that are built, whose biggest resource are people, so I think that this is something that higher education had recognized but also in some ways been late to the game but um private organizations and for profits have known it for a while you know Home Depot Georgia Power you know they know they need a chief diversity officer, now the [local NBA team] you know athletic organizations recognize they need, but large of an organizations whose primary resources are human beings which basically by definition means that they are incredibly diverse no matter how you slice it are incredibly diverse need, needs someone in an office, needs an individual who is dedicated to making sure that, that are taken care of in some ways however that needs to be defined at your organization, and so I think that's why in higher ed. so we have different constituents you know but we're just like any other organization you know students, it might be clients or customers you know we have students and we have faculty and you know it's just titles and different functions, but it's a complex organization and it needs that.

Harry mentioned the benefits of leveraging diversity. He suggested the impact on the university if diversity is leveraged:

It helps your university to be competitive, competitive with its graduates, competitive with its employer retention and recruitment efforts, competitive with its overall campus climate and its relevance to everyday challenges that are our country is experiencing.

"Moving the needle" is a common term used to refer to forward progress. After hearing two participants mention "moving the needle" to refer to forward progress I believed the term best summarized the overall meaning of this study. To move the needle is a phrase used to mean

being effective or to get closer to a goal; in this case it means making substantial progress towards inclusive excellence. The objective for CDOs is to be an effective diversity executive by achieving inclusive excellence on their campuses. To achieve inclusive excellence means to work in a unique role of a diversity executive to advocate for diversity despite the challenges of resistance, politics, or deprivation.

Summary

The meaning made from the personal or professional experiences have prompted sensitivity for diversity issues, leading to their role as a senior diversity executive in to contexts of higher education. This chapter is an overview of the participants' background and experiences to provide depth to the context of this study. Each CDO had a unique path to their role; that journey as noted in this chapter, impacted their practice. The narratives throughout this chapter provided details about the experiences that prompted each participant to develop a lens for diversity. Their experiences contributed to why and how CDOs understood their work as diversity.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The purpose of this narrative study was to examine the professional learning of Chief Diversity Officers (CDOs) who work in higher education. Four research questions were used to guide the research process. First, what do CDOs identify as their learning needs? Second, what strategies do CDOs utilize for learning? Third, how do institutional factors inhibit or support CDOs' learning? Fourth, what is the impact of professional learning for CDOs working in higher education?

This chapter presents the participants narratives in response to the research questions. The chapter begins with a chart to illustrate the relationship between the research questions and the responding themes and the sub-themes. The themes are presented using narratives to provide the meaning and a connection to the study. First, narratives about what CDOs identify as learning needs are presented. Second, the strategies that CDOs utilize for professional learning are discussed. Third, information is provided about the institutional factors that inhibit or support CDOs' professional learning. Finally, the act of "moving the needle" is discussed to explain the impact of professional learning on how effective CDOs are in their role.

Themes of the Study

Four major themes were derived in response to the research questions. In addition to the four themes, there are eight sub-themes. This chapter is a detailed description about the four themes along with narratives that represent the most salient perspectives. Table 3 lists the themes, sub-themes, and the relationship to the research questions. Narratives were taken from

each participant, however only those that described the concept of the majority with the most description were used.

Table 4

Themes and Sub-Themes

Research Question	Theme	Sub-Themes
RQ 1: CDOs develop learning needs	Master the intricacies of the CDO role in higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the factors associated with institutional culture • Comprehend the details of being a CDO
RQ 2: Strategies used for learning	Develop an individualized learning plan based on context and needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement individual learning methods • Learn using informal methods
RQ 3: Institutional factors that inhibit or support	Implement learning based on individual and institutional factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and challenge from the university • Learn from experience and circumstances
RQ 4: Impact of professional learning	“Move the needle” on institutional diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ professional skills to be effective • Adapt to an evolving role through professional learning

After hearing two participants mention “moving the needle” to symbolize forward progress I believed the term best summarized the overall meaning of this study. To move the needle is a phrase used to mean being effective or to get closer to a goal; in this case it means making substantial progress towards inclusive excellence. The objective for CDOs is to be an effective diversity executive by achieving inclusive excellence on their campuses. To reach inclusive excellence means to work in a unique role of a diversity executive as an advocate for diversity despite the challenges of resistance, politics, or deprivation. This phrase (moving the

needle) is descriptive of the purpose for CDOs doing their work, which is to make a difference in regards to equity and inclusion.

Master the intricacies of the CDO role in the university

The first theme is about what CDOs identify as their learning needs. Two sub-themes emerged: a) understanding the factors associated with the institutional culture; and b) to comprehend the details of being a CDO. Eight participants arrived to higher education institutions through academic or student affairs. Susan and Ann had similar paths through faculty positions followed by academic administrative roles. Richard entered the CDO role with an academic background where he progressed from post-doctoral to professor. Bob, Harry, Gladys, James and George entered higher education as student affairs professionals in multicultural affairs or related diversity areas. Two arrived to the academy (higher education) as a CDO for the first time in the higher education profession. Jane and Mary entered the CDO role as “outsiders” or unfamiliar with the higher education context. Jane became a teaching assistant after working in the insurance profession as a compliance officer. Mary was offered the CDO position after working as a legal officer in the government sector. The learning needs were impacted by higher education history and University culture.

Regardless of their background all of the participants for this study discussed the importance of learning the context of practice. The contextual issues have a direct impact on how effective a CDO is with advancing institutional diversity. For example, learning the governance of a university or understanding how to approach sensitive campus issues are examples of being a thoughtful executive. Acquiring knowledge about higher education and the university (the context) is a part of the professional learning process. Harry’s narrative about “understanding” is a general statement about what it means to learn the context:

...understanding the university culture, understanding processes, the history of the university, but I also think it's important to understand budget, understand...different pathways of communication formal/informal that's an important learning need especially on a larger campus because it might take two years to really understand how that works and how to effectively communicate through all different levels of the university whether it's electronically, verbally, informally over coffee, those are some of the skills that can be valid in pushing a diversity agenda. It's not always done in a formal matter so I think understanding the informal sector of how the university runs is very important.

First, understanding the institutional culture is essential to navigating the CDO role (e.g., developing relationships, learning processes). Second, understanding the intricacies of being a CDO in higher education is a necessary to the learning portfolio (e.g. changing perceptions, learning policy). The CDO has to approach issues with discernment as they navigate the university with caution in order to avoid pitfalls.

Understand the Factors Associated with the Institutional Culture

The first sub-theme is a list of factors that are involved when CDOs learn about the institutional culture. Learning about contextual issues involved understanding the faculty and staff procedures, learning how to build consensus, combating resistance, and navigating the trenches of the university. Leveraging relationships is a factor when CDOs are learning about the university culture; allies, supporters, and resisters provide useful information about the campus community. The participants discussed campus politics as they learned to navigate the university, which involved learning about procedures, leveraging the presidents' involvement, and understanding the areas of influence on campus (e.g., influential people who may or may not be campus executives).

Developing and managing healthy relationships with constituents on campus was mentioned by all of the participants as a way to learn the institutional culture. Attempting to make change without developing relationships may lead to resistance from students, administration, faculty or staff. A CDO must learn the terrain of the university in order to avoid a catastrophe, rendering the executive ineffective. The inability to connect with constituents (e.g., students) could lead to backlash that eventually derails any progressive efforts.

“Tap into the injection points” (leverage strategic relationships). The CDOs often relied on others to help sustain diversity efforts on campus. They learned to develop strong working relationships with internal and external constituents are necessary and somewhat like a first step. When asking questions about the institutional culture or navigating the politics of the institutions, CDOs relied on allies or supporters, as James explained below. He mentioned how he sometimes felt “lonely” and leveraging relationships in pursuit of allies. His narrative was about “tapping into” (symbolizing connecting or networking) which refers to knowing how and when to leverage formal and informal supporters:

You’ve got to be prepared because you’re going to have put your neck out there, you’re going to have to challenge some things and sometimes it can be a lonely existence and so certainly that’s one, being courageous and being politically savvy...you’ve got to know how to negotiate the institution and you’ve got to learn how to tap into not just the formal but also the informal opinion leaders. I think you’ve got to know how to leverage resources. I think you’ve got to know how to leverage people. I think you’ve got to know how to tap and engage in community. And so you’ve got to know the work of diversity and inclusion in complex and nuanced ways.

Bob shared his perspective in his description of what it means to engage with the campus community. He mentioned “injection points” to symbolize influencing professionals in certain areas of the university to recognize diversity as a resource:

...when you have a forward thinking president, that’s always a resource even if they don’t know the diversity game because that’s why they hired you, you’re supposed to be the expert so they hired you for your job. But then...there is the Centers, like the Center for Faculty Teaching and Learning, they should be strategic partners, Institutional Research, a strategic resource human resources as well and then leadership, Faculty Senate, Academic Leadership Council should be areas where you can go and inject certain diversity initiatives to make them real. Over in Student Affairs, certain areas of that like the Greek system...there is a huge injection point if you use it the right way. And even the athletic system, a relationship with the coaches is critical as well to the extent that you have active organizations in the community that aren’t afraid to come on campus and make something happen and aren’t afraid to hope something of campus. Those are good resources as well.

Learning about the supportive networks within the university community gave the CDOs a connection to develop knowledge. Mary talked about relying on colleagues who support diversity and having the insight to understand when to reach out:

Good colleagues and acknowledgement that there are times when I don’t know what I don’t know and being inquisitive and having people that are supportive and are willing to tell me when I’ve got blind spots. And the factors that support my learning is recognizing that as much as I want to believe that I know it all, I don’t. So, that’s where I think the humility part is. And you live in a learning community. And if you understand

that is where you are, you have an obligation to expand your own knowledge and fortunately there are brilliant people here that are just as committed to our goals.

Students are key constituents, as they are the purpose for the learning enterprise. Each participant engaged with the student population at varying levels. Susan, Bob, Harry, Gladys, James, George, and Ann found strategies to stay connected with the student population; advisement of student organizations, one-on-one meetings or mentorship, and other informal strategies were mentioned. Jane and Mary interacted with students through forums and meetings on campus. This suggests that student affairs type work has impacted the level of intentionality between the student population and the CDO. Susan explained the level of student involvement that was expressed by eight of the participants with a student affairs background who had a high level of interaction with the student population:

I'm the advisor for the minority graduate student organization because I also realize I had my own experience as being a graduate student, but I have not had a lot of experience working with graduate students of color here at AU so I've been the advisor of the group for a couple of years now and that has been very helpful in terms of being able to making sure our office supports that group of students I've, I'm also now and this is not, my mode of education was not becoming the advisor it just kind of happened this way, but I'm also the advisor for [an undergraduate scholarship student organization] because they were organizing and needed an advisor and I'm the first advisor they had and they needed an advisor so in terms of talking about that population, which is students of color but not necessarily African American or Hispanic, which are student we have typically focused on, but there were quite a few Asian students as well so I've become the advisor for that

group so there's education to me; it's about trying to educate myself more about the populations that need to be served here at the University A.

Harry mentioned a concept about the benefit off campus networks. Relationships off campus offer a different perspective about diversity work and led to other partnerships:

...I think it's creating a space where you can build those relationships and learn from your colleagues, that's very valuable to a CDO. And also...being able to connect to corporate entities, being able to establish partnerships with corporations is an interesting factor that has helped my professional development significantly whether it's through partnerships and sponsorships through the university, whether it's the fundraising initiatives or whether it's creating pipelines for career opportunities for our diverse students, that's been a greater learning experience for me as well because it gave me a sense of how the university fits into the bigger picture.

Institutional diversity work is the work of more than the CDO. The participants discussed how developing and leveraging relationships with constituents on and off campus enhanced their work. On-campus constituents shared information about the institution. Off-campus constituents had resources (e.g., information and financial) to assist CDOs as well. Understanding the institutional culture was one of the early learning needs CDOs identified.

“Strategic moves” (contextual issues). Each participant was aware of the factors involved in the context that was the backdrop to their work as the university diversity executive. Learning how to navigate contextual issues was more of a task for CDOs in comparison to other executives. The diversity office must work across the university and learn other skills to sustain their vision. The participants discussed the importance of seeking buy-in, developing relationships, and being politically astute as essential to their effectiveness. Richard talked about

developing a connection with the faculty and administration. Learning the culture of the institution meant “knowing how to get things done,” and understanding the power dynamics on campus:

I had a staff who kind of knew what was going on and we could figure it out sort of...but it's better now with a real structure in place and so that was another big thing. I had already learned how to operate a faculty senate and the administration but if you don't know how to do that, that's a major learning. And, of course, those are institutionally idiosyncratic...the institution has its own culture and so you have to learn the culture of the institution, how people get things done, how they resist things, who really has power, how they use it.

Ann's narrative about having the right people involved meant to involve others at the university in diversity work. Ann shared the need to involve others in advancing diversity and the skills needed to engage constituents in the process:

And diversity work, it takes time and it takes having a goal and taking strategic steps to accomplish that goal and knowing that you can't do it by yourself. And so listening skills are some of the skills, good questioning, being able to see the big picture and being able to push people but knowing when to pull back. Never forgetting what the goal is that you want to accomplish and have a timeline for accomplishing that. Bringing the right people on board, not only organizing a committee...I want the supporters, I want the people who have done the work who see themselves as leaders and some who don't and I want some of the naysayers on my committee. They keep us [focused].

Seeking buy-in from multiple constituents is a need for CDOs as they maneuver the institutional culture. Mary talked about bringing the right people to the table to seek consensus and when to make an executive decision:

...but it is identifying the principles that are associated with what we need to do. It's getting the buy in. It's the principal stakeholders, getting the buy in, bringing them to the table when it's appropriate. Getting their input on whatever it is that needs to be done and then bringing that information back, coming up with a plan or strategy for getting it done. Bringing it back around to them. So, it's mostly...when I say informal...but there is a method to that as well. So you've got to be able to know what it is you want to achieve and then what's the best way of going about it. Now, some things you have to move quickly on and so there isn't a lot of going out here and massaging the universe in order to get there. And then there are times when you have to do a more reflective kind of process to get as broad a buy in as you can depending on what impact of what it is.

Understanding how and when to navigate informal and formal spaces was important to diversity executives. Harry spoke about the institutional culture when he explained how to navigate the informal and formal aspects of the university:

....understanding the university culture, understanding processes, the history of the university, but I also think it's important to understand budget, understand...different pathways of communication formal/informal that's an important learning need especially on a larger campus because it might take two years to really understand how that works and how to effectively communicate through all different levels of the university whether it's electronically, verbally, informally over coffee, those are some of the skills that can be valid in pushing a diversity agenda. It's not always done in a formal matter so I think

understanding the informal sector of how the university runs is very important...[Also,]

I've learned that the entire burden of diversity doesn't rest on my shoulders.

The culture of universities has been to have evidence as opposed to anecdotal solutions (e.g., decision-makers, faculty, and staff). Influencing senior leadership (campus executives) involved having the data and research to support claims that are made about institutional diversity. Mary learned early in her role the necessity for research and the data when advocating for institutional diversity. She talked about the need for evidence in order to navigate the context:

In this environment I knew and I figured it out very early...how important it was to rely on research to inform what we did and what we wanted to do. And I just didn't have that background. I was more law. Okay, so, yes, I could read case laws, I could read law review articles. I could do my legal research and sometimes you'd stumble on something that was a legal theory that was being supported by social scientists around name the issue, the glass ceiling and impacts on women, that sort of thing. So, I think that was probably, for me, the priority learning piece that was a little bit of "I have some work to do." I just didn't know, quite honestly, coming in here the breadth of the work that had been done. Now, the application of the breath of the work wasn't really being done. And I figured out very early particularly in the employment context, if we were going to impact workforce diversity and faculty diversity, in particular, I was going to have to use some of that research to support the things that I was advocating to do.

Professional learning meant developing knowledge about the university governance, processes, networks, and buy-in. Identifying allies and listening to resisters is a strategy that gave the CDO access to ideas and institutional information.

Comprehend the details of being a CDO

All 10 participants mentioned some aspect of learning about how to be a diversity executive. Developing the skills that were useful for being a diversity executive was something CDOs learned from previous professional roles or other experiences. Understanding the culture shaped the lens for how CDOs approached their practices and adapted to the institutional context. First, developing learning to develop trust among constituents and being perceived as credible is essential to being an effective CDO. All 10 participants mentioned the importance of proving that the CDO profession is substantial and that diversity executive can impact other areas of the university.

“You have to gain credibility” (trust and credibility). Developing trust begins with having interpersonal skills and is an essential core value for CDOs to be effective, which was mentioned by each participant. Developing interpersonal skills is a detail that CDOs learn at some point during their career, and it is a necessary trait for diversity executives as Ann explained:

And I noticed this, too, I think you have to have the energy to do this work, not physical energy and the mental acuity to do it, you have to be sharp. People notice you...because we're members of the underrepresented group, too. They notice if you come to work early, they notice when you stay late. One lady came up to me maybe six months after I'd been here and she said, 'You work hard, you're here before I get here and you're here after I leave' because we have to many meetings that we go to in the evening and sometimes early morning. But when I walked through the campus I'm deliberate with my intention of focus. But I take time to say something to people that I know and engage them and then sometimes they'll stop me and say, 'I really have this question' and I say,

‘Call my office, I’ll see you’ and my assistant says, ‘Dr. Brown, your calendar is so full, how are you going to fit them, they met you on the campus’ because they’re the people who are going to support you in difficult times. So, those are the kinds of things. You have to have people skills. I can’t take someone doing this job that’s not a people person. And steeped in the literature, you can have the areas where I’d say, not deficiencies, but areas for improvement...but you can’t come in here not carrying some skills. People being able to communicate effectively, being able to connect with people...I think that’s one that’s not...and you’ve got to be able to work as team.

Trust building is involved when the CDO is learning the campus executive role. The CDO was perceived as credible by various constituents and the CDO seeks support and allies to advance diversity. Gladys talked about trust and credibility, but goes further to mention transparency. The data suggest that CDOs can be transparent with the president or provost and other senior executives based on the level of perceived support for advancing diversity work. According to Gladys:

...I think especially for folks who are new CDOs to their campus, not exactly new to the field but just new to their campus...there is a lot of trust building. A lot of people have think you should be doing this, but think you’re not doing your job...and so that is definitely a challenge that I’m currently working through, hearing what people are saying. Because people are finding it very easy to tell me what they think our job is and then I have to clarify to them what my role really is and then showing them, ‘Here’s the work I actually engage in’ for them to understand and so, I guess my approach to that challenge has been availing myself to be transparent and open and inclusive of others to get the work done.

Harry contributed his natural ability to appreciate and understand diversity issues that make him authentic and credible:

I'd be doing those things naturally because that's part of who I am and that's probably the interesting soft skill that some Chief Diversity Officers may not have is that...there is a sense of authenticity that I believe should come across with the position because students as well as administrators, community members can kind of sense whether or not you're committed and authentic in the work that you do. It's not just...the party line of diversity that the university wants to put out although that might be part of it.

Credibility matters for CDOs who must develop a perception as credible and a safe resource. The data suggest that students, faculty, and staff will recognize a disingenuous diversity executive who attempts to advance institutional diversity. Mary's narrative described what it means to be authentic and/or credible while being a CDO:

...my view is you have to gain credibility and that requires always staying in touch with the various stakeholders and constituents that are here as well as outside of here. So, through formal staff meetings, whether it's the president's cabinet, whether it's the provost's staff, whether it's...attending some governance meetings which I try to avoid as much as I can.

Educating the campus community about what a CDO does for the university community less of a challenge once the CDO is accepted as credible. Ann summarized by saying:

...you have to deal with a lot of different personalities and a lot of different perceptions and ways of doing things. And that can wear on you but it's finding out how to navigate that. So, I think it is difficult this work is...it would have been helpful...because this is not easy work. A lot of people think it's more like being the campus diversity

planner/programmer, you bring in nice keynote speakers and have these luncheons and dinners. So, change is a critical piece.

All of the participants interacted with students, faculty, and staff in informal settings to develop relationships. The data suggest that CDOs must be intentional about developing relationships to gain allies, to be visible, and eliminate myths about institutional diversity. Harry talked about his approach to learning by getting to know individuals with institutional knowledge and a potential ally:

...also just taking new faculty or even older faculty who have been there for a while out for coffee and just talking about some of the challenges that they might be facing within their department or across campus, just get a better sense of what challenges they're experiencing but also to eliminate some of the bureaucracy that a larger university might have.

The CDO role is more than being a program planner or festival promotor. James shared his thought about the perception of CDOs being credible executives:

You can't just be the simple approaches and I think all too often that's what institutions really want, they want what I call the 3 F's and T and they're okay with those things...Fun, Food, Festivals and T-shirts but if you really start to dig down to the substance of things, that's when people are challenged and I think that's where people in our role, we have to know the work and we have to say, 'Okay, some of those things they can be part of a comprehensive whole but they can't be the only thing. I'm not just going to be doing a whole bunch of festivals' and if we want to celebrate from time to time but how do we engage, how do we have these dialogs and how do we move the dial. I think certainly you have to understand budgets, you've got to understand the whole academic

enterprise. And in these kinds of roles more and more certainly...often you will have a compliance area that reports to you and so you've got to understand compliance issues, the Title 9, Title 6, Title 7, ADA, all of those kinds of things...you don't have to know...if you've got an office that reports to you that does it...you need to know enough to be able to talk about, lead around it. But you don't really need to be deeply, immersed in it.

“It's not in my portfolio” (learning the unknown). Background and experience shaped the learning needs of the participants. Each CDO discussed learning policies, skills, or other aspects of the unknown. The CDO role is evolving where CDOs must evolve or adapt to the expectations and needs of the context (the university). Ann talked about learning while working at her university by participating as a budget committee member. In her current role she learned about different sectors of the university due to the type of university (e.g. medical school, law school, etc.). She also learned about areas she never considered she would be involved with in her career:

Coming here serving on the budget review committee, I got to learn about all of the entities on campus and what their budgets looked like and what their challenges were around the budget situation. Being at an institution that had the RCM senate based model coming here, we have a decentralized budget system and so you're constantly learning through the different environments that you're in...I'm learning more about medical center in the health system that I knew. I'm having an opportunity to work on some things about supplier diversity and how people perceive a minority SWAM we call it, Small Minority of Women-Owned Companies, supplier, I mean, hiring them to do work.

Susan, Bob, Harry, Gladys, Richard, Jane, and Ann specifically indicated a need to know federal laws that impact diversity on university campuses. Federal laws like Title IX and similar decrees are helpful for CDOs as common knowledge, especially if compliance is a unit of the office. Susan talked about the legal aspects of being a CDO:

I think across the board the opportunities to learn about equal opportunity about EEO issues has been critical because in some ways in some ways because it's not in my portfolio I think if it was in the portfolio it would be more transparent because you need to know that because you are directing that office, but because it separate at our institution there can be this kind of false divide if you will and it's not, and I mean I need to know what those requirements are I need to know the universities affirmative action plan I need to know what those requirement are even though my office is not the office responsible for them.

James stated that he desired more knowledge about the legal aspects of his role and the motivation to continue learning:

The more time I spend here I have figured out, I definitely need to do Title IX training and EOC...I need that training and that's something I'll look into even though we will hire an EEO officer, I still think that would be beneficial because some cases, diversity offices are merged and that person does both. So, I'm still looking and trying to find out what other trainings I can get because you can't stay static, you can't just stop.

Developing administrative skills was mentioned by Richard, Jane, and Mary; participants who did not have direct administrative experience in higher education. Richard, who has been a faculty member most of his career, shared his experience:

Well, having not been an administrator before, I had to learn about how to...I mean, I don't think I had much trouble with sort of running a large organization but I didn't know everything I needed to know about all of the HR issues that come up and how you go about developing your staff and dealing with HR controversies. Budgeting, again, to me, budgets make a lot of sense just sort of inherently but I had to learn how the university does them; I had already learned how to operate a faculty senate and the administration but if you don't know how to do that, that's a major learning.

This section provided insight into how CDOs begin to transition into the diversity executive by comprehending what they perceive as their learning needs. The participants reported their need to learn the institutional culture and how to be a CDO in that space. Learning foundational knowledge about higher education and the institution were mentioned as learning needs. A part of comprehending the university context involved learning how to be a diversity executive – how to be a CDO. Learning policies was also a part of comprehending the complexities of the university. The learning needs influenced their self-guided approach to finding opportunities professional learning opportunities.

Develop an individualized learning plan based on context and need. The participants discussed how human and organizational factors impact diversity on campus due to the complex structure of universities. The diversity executive role is a unique one because: a) it is a new role to higher education; and b) the political backdrop of higher education (the context). The professional learning involved the CDOs navigating the terrains to advance diversity work (moving the needle). First, the CDOs learned to advance diversity work by identifying deficits in regards to diversity on campus, and opportunities for individual professional learning. Deficits included access to resources and navigating the institution. Second, advancing diversity

work meant that a CDO should continuously learn about current trends and best practices. The participants reported information that suggests a CDO must be an executive who has to deal with more resistance, often seek resources, and engage in learning on how to be the diversity executive. Other campus executive roles have a historical presence in higher education and at universities; hence the professional has less education and advocacy associated with the position.

Implement Individual Professional Learning Methods

The professional learning process for CDOs occurred through informal or self-directed methods. There are no certification programs for diversity executives, but a common knowledge is emerging from grassroots academic programs. As more sponsored programs provide a formal context for diversity executives, current professional learning is informal or self-directed. Seeking out opportunities was self-motivated by CDOs as opposed to being encouraged by supervisors or other executives. All 10 participants discussed their role in finding opportunities on and off campus to learn. A major point raised by the participants was the fact that no university is the same; each university will require different learning for the factors in that context. It becomes a complex issue for CDOs as Harry explained:

...I think one thing that I've learned from some of my professional development experiences is that each CDO is completely different. Their skill set is completely different, the university campus where they are is completely different, and the readiness of a campus for whatever CDO is in place is completely different because the evolution of University A campus is in some ways is so drastically different across country, across region, not to mention the two types of universities that exist, public, private, HBCU...although you could say, 'Okay, they all have these three general characteristics' even within that, their role on campus is still going to be different and the priorities might

change from year to year. So, I think that's one of the most valuable things that I've learned from some of my professional development opportunities in meeting with regional Chief Diversity Officers who attend conferences is that...the prototype of a Chief Diversity Officer is something that's very fluid which is why sometimes search committees struggle with finding one is because they think they know what they want...and sometimes they're not prepared for that or, they might be prepared for the list but they didn't anticipate other skills sets that that person might possess or actually might need for the position...So, each university campus has different needs for what they're looking for in a chief diversity officer. So, for many universities, yeah, having a background in Student Affairs was incredibly valuable, but at the same token, there are some university campuses who'd rather have a strong faculty member who might be tenure track who has done extensive research, who is well published and may not have a relationship with the students at all, a significant relationship students at all ...I think it depends on the university campus and the readiness for a particular type of CDO...and that's an interesting phenomenon as these positions emerge...people will refer to 'Oh, okay, well, that's a student CDO', 'Oh, that's a faculty administrative CDO'...and I like to think that there are people out there who could do both and be able to code switch and understand the differences between both cultures in communities and be able to fit in with both cultures and communities effectively.

“Learn from others” (benchmarking other institutions). The CDOs often surveyed other institutions to learn what progress or initiatives were being implemented. The participants benchmarked to see what best practices are useful; a common practice among CDOs. All of the participants talked about benchmarking; however Jane, George, Richard, Bob, Susan, and Ann

made specific references to reference the concept of benchmarking. Jane, like the other CDOs, talked about benchmarking to learn what peer institutions were doing about institutional diversity:

...I looked at other best practices of other universities, I just kept looking and kept looking and started pulling things. We have about twenty-six peer institutions that we routinely pair ourselves to and so I already have that list and so I start pulling, 'What do they do? What does the CDO do...do they have one? What does that person routinely do?'

James mentioned benchmarking as well so that he can move the dial forward on institutional diversity:

...you want to understand it in really nuance and complex ways and you want to learn from others who are having some success on their campuses in helping to move the dial. So, I think that's a biggy, how do you get it done inside of places like this where there is a lot of rhetoric around it and I think you'll find that at a lot of institutions and the commitment isn't always there. So, how do you do it and often with limited resources? How to be effective in those environments where often it can feel like you're the only voice in trying to move this work

The participants' narratives suggested the need for more of an intentional plan to resource diversity efforts. The majority of participants reported having the need for additional staff or funding. There is also the resource of learning additional knowledge. Each participant mentioned some type of benchmarking of other universities or other CDOs.

The CDO is often confronted with challenges that require them to be creative, especially with resources for diversity efforts. Participants rely on what they have in regards to human or

financial resources, but they also work to fill the gaps if there is a lack of resources. Learning to fundraise and other new skills is how most participants approached challenges with inadequate resources.

“Being connected beyond the university” (professional networks). Professional associations and conferences also offer learning opportunities for CDOs. All of the participants talked about a budget for professional development. The professional development offers opportunities to attend conferences or other activities to learn. One participant desired additional resources for professional development, but realized it was a work in progress. Susan explained her desire for additional funds to expand learning for the entire staff:

...we have a travel budget for our office which I think has been historically conceptualized as my travel budget uh but I share it and I am one whose entrepreneurial to make sure that my staff can also attend and travel and for their um professional development we make money, we do outside if we run out of money we do outside trainings for people in the private sector who pay us...ok I need some more money so that we could travel so that we can send more than one person to NCORE which is a relatively expensive conference so we're going to make some money to make sure we can do that. Now having said that, the university is very supportive I honestly know and feel that I, if there was something that I identified that was going to be pricey that I felt strongly that was going to be supportive for myself or someone on my staff I would go to the Provost and ask for the money straight up and tell her this is exactly what I want it for.

Mary perceived herself as being immersed so that she can indulge in her “daily meal” to nourish her professional learning:

That ranges from community based experiences off campus, external workshops, learning conferences, networking with colleagues, mentors, eating this stuff as a part of my daily meal. If you were to look at my office, between the books, the paper, my access research ...through the technology. It's fairly comprehensive...

Professional learning can occur from a number of encounters, including conferences. Professional associations are a common activity that most professionals join for a variety of benefits. The participants overwhelmingly mentioned the National Association for Diversity Officers in Higher Education (NADOHE), which started in 2007 through the American Council on Education. NADOHE is the only professional association for CDOs in higher education. Ann, a founding member of NADOHE, talks about the learning from others:

I'm a founding member of the NADOHE National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Ed. Served as the second vice president. And one thing I realized when I was there is that we needed a strategic plan. So, we got the glorious task of...once you put it out there, you volunteered. And I had a time with it starting a new position here at new institution. I think working and being a part of a national organization and seeing how other Chief Diversity Officers do their work at different types of institutions and it also provides me a learning circle or people that we can trust with sharing of information, looking at particular strategies that you are examining. I'm also very involved with ACE, American Council on Education, and their inclusive excellence.

The NADOHE was mentioned by the participants as the main organization for CDOs. The organization is a resource for learning and networking with other diversity executives who do the same work. James is engaged with NADOHE, and other professional organizations where he serves in a leadership role:

...I attend conferences and annual meetings where we're talking about emerging issues or in some cases helping set the strategy for associations when it comes to diversity and inclusion. For example, I set up a member of National Association of Diversity Officers of Higher Education, this institution is a member of the Association of Public Land Grant Universities and under that group, there is also commissions and councils and there is a Commission for Access Diversity in Excellence, CADE and I'm a member of that and actually one of the regional coordinators for that.

Moving the dial means learning about current information available to CDOs. James mentioned staying connected with the university issues, but also understanding national trends and occurrences in the corporate sector:

I think staying connected...and networking nationally, I think is really important because there are people out there, some people have been doing it far longer than you, some people not...but some who are very creative and you can just throw out, you know, if you become close or...sometimes even on networks, "Well, I'm having this issue, I'm having this challenge" are the things that you have found to be effective and really moving the dial. Or 'I've been told this...how do I get around it?' so you're not always trying to figure it out on your own. Certainly, I think what's been really one of the strategies for me is also being connected beyond the university, beyond the institution. What I mean by that like to alumni who are passionate about this especially if they're influential alumni...that you know has the ear of the chancellor and like I said this is the kind of position that you have to know that you can be shown a door at any time if you're being ineffective, if you're being really ineffective, you really can because you can make

people uncomfortable and it's not...I always tell people, 'You must be professional' when I talk to young people, I'm always professional.

Mary stayed connected with NADOHE, as well as legal professional organizations.

She explained:

I've got among multiple professional organizations that deal with work and the list serves. So, I get updates from NACURAH which college and university new attorneys. I do a lot of webinars that deal with pressing issues, things that are at the time...so, if it's Title 9 and campus sexual assault, we're doing quite a bit of that now. I rely on professional organizations or discipline or associations that are tied to this work. As an attorney, I'm expected to maintain ...we don't have continuous education units right now but...you've got to stay current or you're going to be sued for malpractice and I want to keep my license as [the university] attorney. So, there is NADOHE, of course, as one vehicle for the professional development, maintaining my skills. Who is publishing in this area? I use the Journal of Diversity in Higher Education as one way of kind of keeping informed on some of the new research that's being done. I have scholars on our campus who...I go from the organizational work whether it's the Higher Ed associations that do work, whether that's NASPA you know, you name it, to the extent that they're touching on diversity work, we try to keep up with that.

Learn Using Informal Methods

Professional learning can be accomplished through informal methods like reading and knowledge sharing. The participants talked about reading current literature about diversity and other related topics. Additionally, sharing knowledge through their networks was mentioned as a source for professional learning. Despite their academic training and leadership skills the

participants desired to learn through readings. While their time as an executive restricts the time dedicated to readings, it was mentioned as an important strategy for learning. James reviewed a variety of readings as he explained:

Also, to strategize but also that they will help you think through some of the issues and maybe some ways for moving the ball forward. So, those are probably the main...books...I'm always buying books but finding the time to read them. I also have a couple at home now...having to admit it, sometimes it takes a year or more to finally get to them but I always get to them and then read and then see what's there but other colleagues. I'm always getting articles from colleagues, 'Hey, have you seen this?' or 'Read this, look what they're saying about how you can do this or that'....or 'Did you see what this campus did to educate their campus around Title IX?' or whatever it is. And so colleagues are very helpful both internally but also externally.

Susan, a historian by training, values background information and reading to learn more about a topic:

I mean as a historian the reading, I mean that's what I do, you know, I find out about something and you go and do the research and I mean that's just kind of my natural go to, so I will always that will always be my kind of go to I hear about something that uh I don't know much about that, you know and you know of course in the field of LGBTQ there have been things, you know ,as I think we've been called on to facilitate some transgender issues on campus and things so those issues you know I need to educate myself a little bit more about.

George suggested that CDOs should remain sharp by knowing what's "on the horizon." Readings and sharing knowledge within networks (i.e. conversations, conferences) positions the CDO to be immersed in the networks that are useful for professional learning:

...keeping abreast of the research. So, Diversity Issues in Higher Education...those are useful tools to keep an eye to see what's on the radar. And then interacting with your colleagues. That networking and interaction is the dominant mode; so, the way that I learn and it has benefitted me is by jumping into the issue area and say 'Let's figure out...let's discover what is this body of work about?' And so I know more about community colleges than I did. I'm looking forward to trying and developing a relationship of community colleges with the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education just like I did with HBCU's and let's be honest, so, it's about getting engaged and involved...

Mentorship. An informal method of learning for CDOs is through mentorship. Mentorship from the president, provost or other individual was mentioned by the majority of participants. The mentoring relationship resulted in learning about themselves, but also how to be a more effective CDO. According to Harry:

...[it has] been priceless having a president that's willing to not only supervise but mentor you through sometimes crisis situations because every university is going to experience crisis...being on the same page with your president in how to respond to those challenges is a great professional development opportunity.

Ann mentioned her mentorship experience as well. Her background in diversity instruction proved to be valuable, but she cherished the insight shared by senior leaders:

When I started this work, I said, ‘They’re asking me to lead this university...I don’t know anything about doing this?’ I’d taught courses on multicultural counseling...I am indeed a person from an underrepresented group so I am diverse but that doesn’t make me know a lot about a lot of different things but I said I’m open. And with my background and knowing the right people, I can learn more about how you lead this effort. And so I said I’m a leader and so I’ve led difficult efforts and challenges and I’m a people person, I think I can do this. But it really took having good mentoring and coaching because I’m a diversity officer but from the provost and president of ways when I came in with ideas.

Sometimes the advice from the president of the institution is a resource. Harry experienced mentoring with his campus president and learning more about being strategic:

Well, it’s kind of like a senior seminar in the sense that you’re meeting with the individual and they’re going to talk to you about some of the challenges they’re facing and help you understand what their thought processes for solving problems...and also give you a sense of the bigger picture that they’re experience as the leader of the university is valuable because then you learn more about strategy, learn more about thought process then you can be more strategic in your messaging when you know exactly what the president is thinking in saying and how his or her messaging want to be packaged.

This section was about the CDOs self-motivation for professional learning. The participants mentioned taking responsibility for their professional learning with little to no encouragement from supervisors or senior leaders. A CDO is unlike other campus executives because resources for diversity vary and may be inadequate on some campuses. Additionally, the CDO is more involved and self-motivated to engage in ongoing professional learning

opportunities. The professional learning about how to advance diversity work (advancement) is a responsibility that CDOs self-manage to advance their learning.

Implement Learning Based on Individual and Institutional Factors

The participants in this study discussed the resources available from the institution that impact their opportunities for professional learning. The data show how CDOs believe they have to demonstrate their credibility beyond diversity work by leading initiatives. The data also suggest that CDOs are self-motivated in finding opportunities for professional learning, but there are some strategies for learning on-campus. The participants discussed their skills they have to do other initiatives besides diversity. Some participants mentioned being involved on campus committees or being the lead for large campus initiatives on projects unrelated to diversity. The majority of the professional learning was found by the participant with little to no encouragement from a supervisor or other leaders. Three participants mentioned the support for professional growth from the president, but it wasn't mentioned by the majority.

Support and Challenges from the University

The participants talked about having knowledge and skills beyond “just diversity work.” A part of learning about being a CDO was to understand the need to change perceptions about the skills and abilities of diversity officers. A CDO can lead other campus efforts that involve strategic planning, assessment projects, or other initiatives. This section offers insight into the narratives that CDOs used to explain their skills and abilities beyond diversity. The participants for this study discussed the many abilities that CDOs possess, meaning they should not be seen and positioned (typecast) as just a diversity executive.

“Do more than just diversity” (typecast). If someone is considered to be typecast then that means they are stereotyped based on one or more characteristics. The participants discussed being “typecast” or seen as only the diversity expert on campus. Harry explained his perspective about being typecast as just someone who understood diversity:

It’s easy to be typecast as....just ‘diversity’...Chief Diversity Officers can do a lot more than diversity...more than heroes and holidays, put it that way. Being able to utilize them in different areas of the campus in different ways is also incredibly valuable if you utilize them for the skill sets that they have; so, another example might be utilizing the CDO to increase revenue streams related to fundraising. Me, as a Chief Diversity Officer sitting down with a potential donor or corporate sponsor, it’s very different from a development officer sitting down with that same individual. It’s a different conversation; it’s a different discussion about what priorities of the university might be in many cases. It’s a different discussion about representing groups in many cases. So, one of the barriers that I’d say in general....is being able to utilize the Chief Diversity Officer as a member of a team with multiple skill sets versus all this person knows as diversity and typecasting them and putting them in a box and that way...I mean, you might find that a Chief Diversity Officer is effective in recruiting a star athletic for your university.

Ann’s narrative explained how the participants expressed their desire to be recognized like other senior leaders:

I think other university officers and especially presidents need to have an understanding of what learning that takes place in the professional development needed for a chief diversity officer. I think they need to recognize that Chief Diversity Officers are like any

other senior leader and need to have the respect and the resources to do their job and the authority to do their job.

Harry uses the university president role as a metaphor for the CDO scope of responsibilities. He said the CDO is valuable to the university in many ways:

...understanding the Chief Diversity Officer can wear more than one hat, same as a president of University A would wear more than one hat. They might be at a basketball game you know celebrating school victories but they're also going to be valuable at meeting with a potential donor, they're also going to be valuable meeting with faculty, they're also valuable meeting with students or alumni and how do you utilize a Chief Diversity Officer effectively beyond the scope of their immediate appearance? Saying, 'Oh Well, this person looks that way and so they're going to be dealing with that population'...the skills that a Chief Diversity Officer has are hopefully multifaceted and fluid and so they could be much more effective and has to be more effective in multiple areas on campus, across or outside of campus.

“The power structure” (institutional politics). Politics are present in most large organizations, especially at the executive level. The participants for this study mentioned politics and the influence on diversity. In general, there are the expected political issues at universities; however, universities are complex organizations. Ann's narrative described the political nature of the CDO role. A CDO must learn how to develop allies through their work across the institution. A strong working relationship with senior administrators and having a perception of being a team player are political in nature:

It's very political. As I stated earlier, this work...we have to work across administrative divisions...it's not limited to diversity work, it impacts supplier diversity, financial

administration, looking at housing, that's in Student Affairs, work with the campus police, we have a health science campus, what's happening at the medical center. And so I'm working constantly at working across boundaries. And so you have to be a team player, you have to know a little bit about those areas but more importantly, you have to be able to connect with people, that they want to see you when you call to make an appointment. I think the best part is when they're calling you and saying, 'Ann, we're about to start this initiative and I want to ask you questions about that' and so the politics of it is that in higher education, I think even in the corporate world, people are wedded to their areas and sometimes they don't want you interfering. But you have to present yourself as a team player and a resource. So, that's a powerful political piece because if they feel like you're intruding, they will block you and block you really fast. So, that's the politics of it.

Engaging the president in a necessary component when advancing diversity as the CDO. Learning how to engage the president means having the data and research but also knowing the president's priorities in regards to his or her vision. Ann developed an understanding of her university so well that she knew how to engage with the president for resources:

You have to also be a supporter of the president's vision but while you're supporting the president's vision, you have to be able to talk to the people on campus who may not have titles, who have legitimate concerns and how do you carry that...but you talk to them from your position of administer but a caring, sympathetic, understanding administrator and you make sure you let them know that 'I hear what you're saying and your thoughts, your ideas will be expressed when doing my conversation in my meetings or an initiative that we're moving forward.' So, they have to know that they can trust you and that's

why those small wins are important and that's why engaging them as often as we can during the academic year to let them know they matter...

Some participants had a line of communication with the president; every CDO may not have the same luxury. A CDO who does not have open communication with the president or provost can encounter extreme difficulty moving the needle on institutional diversity. Jane shared her experience of lacking a strong communication link with the president and how that impacts her work:

This position reports to the president which is huge. However, the president appointed a designee that has no concept other than believing she knows everything. The worst possible thing he could do and so that means that the diversity officer...this was done prior to me coming. So, the diversity officer reports to someone that may or may not tell the president what has been said but at the same time you're not allowed to talk directly to the president. You have to go through me. And so that's a serious impediment. So, you don't have the ear of the person that can make the changes and the one that you do have is not invested and so that means no one is invested and that's unfortunate at E U.; So, if they really want to support diversity and diversity related initiatives, make sure the CDO reports to either the president, the provost or a VP. Only through those avenues will they be taken seriously.

Richard and his colleagues learned about the nexus of power and decision-making on campus. There is a committee that decides what professionals on committees that shape the university and there was a process to belong. Faculty members needed to strategically maneuver the politics in order to "belong" to this high-level committee. He explained:

...we realized that there is an academic senate body called 'the [Highest Committee]'...but that is nexus of power; because that committee appoints all the people on all of the other committees and if you're on that committee, you need to know everybody and everybody needs to know you. And it was a lot of work because each member of that committee had to find membership for six committees and so you had to call people and find out...and then you find out, 'Oh, well, don't call that person they're very uncooperative or they mouth too much'....you start seeing what the power structure actually thought about everybody and 'Oh, yeah, get them on a committee, they'll get something done right away'...and so we started a practice of always having a faculty of color on the [Highest Committee]. And each of those people when they do that service, when they come out they know a lot more about how the university works and they know a lot more people. So, that was the big opening moment for me and for all of the others who have served on it. You've got to do the work, you've got to be in where these decisions are being made and where the people are picking the people because that's how everything works. So, that's probably my biggest learning moment. Once I started making those connections and figuring out who is the ally and who is effective and so on, then we were able to make things happen. That's why they came to me when they came to me to help with the academic strategic plan, that's because a bunch of people knew me and knew that I'd be cooperative and be effective and good to work with and so on. So, that's what you learn, at the end of the day it's all about people and getting in the right circles of people, that's where you can be effective.

George added an important factor that CDOs must acknowledge in regards to timing and when to advocate for issues. He discussed how the CDO can navigate the politics:

...I had to learn that, too, and like...what was the appropriate entry and exit points for certain kinds of issues. Getting involved in the changing of the student code because it doesn't include a provision that specifically it includes racial harassment and doesn't sexual. And I said, 'No, no, no, federal law says you had to do that'...changing the university's commitment to non-discrimination to include things like gender/gender identity, gender expression. So, those kinds of thing, I guess, are the examples of things that challenge you.; So, I think an opportunity for me here, why I really came is because it was the first inaugural person in this position and so it was an opportunity to really define the work and really to carve out what the work should look like and to create and advance university footprint here. And so it's certainly a challenge being new because you're making it up as you go and everybody wants a piece of you. But it's something that can be rewarding because if you're successful everybody will remember that piece.

When James prepared to arrive to his current role he wanted to be careful about his political capital. He preferred that the university develop the diversity office by adjusting prior to his arrival. His goal was not to come in moving units to form a diversity office because it could influence his political capital on campus. He also understood what to question prior to coming to a new CDO role at the university:

I'd been the Assistant to the Chief Diversity Officer and so I'd seen some in the position better than probably a lot of people who had come into the role. And especially coming into a new role...and more and more of these positions are popping up on campuses and so when it's brand new...and I when I first came, they didn't really have any units reporting to it. Well, when they wanted to get me to come...and that was part of the negotiations, 'I'm not coming unless...what are the units?' 'Well, we want you to come

and after you're here and we can talk about it'...I said, 'Naw, I want that set up and I don't want to have my colleagues think I'm trying to take from their portfolio...I don't want to spend a whole lot of political capital in that kind of way.' And so I did ask for it and got those units but...I would have known to ask certain questions, for example...because when I was really negotiating or even about budget and those kinds of things. I was told "Here's the budget" and I said, "It's not sufficient"... "Well, you've got these other pots of money" and this, that and that and the other...and I was "Okay, well then, that's probably workable"....and then you come in and so one of the questions that I wished somebody had told me to ask was, "How much of that money is reoccurring? Is it reoccurring funds or is this non-recurring funds?" and in some cases some of this money they told me about was non-reoccurring pots of money and so then I had to come in and battle because I was like just as fast as I got here, I will leave tomorrow. Because I feel like it's a set up because then you're coming in and you told me this was one of the selling points and to find that this is non-recurring funds and so that means I'm going to have to immediately start cutting things...but then that even takes time to make the connection. And so if you start cutting things, that's a set up right away...."Certain populations will think, he's not committed, look what he did, he came in..." and they don't understand what's taken place behind the scenes.

College and environments are complex organizations with multiple processes and have historical and cultural roots. Understanding the complexities of a campus is essential for any CDO who desires to move the needle on institutional diversity. Regardless of the CDO's background it is necessary to learn the multiple components of the campus and engage with its

constituents to develop networks. The contextual details directly impact how effective a CDO can leverage change on campus, which in itself is a process.

“People being territorial” (sacred processes). Learning the process of recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty and staff was a challenge initially for all of the participants. Learning how to be involved with search processes and understanding how to be effective were concerns expressed by the participants. The participants talked about working with human resources to recruit diverse staff through a variety of strategies. Retaining faculty of color is sometimes an issue due to campus climate, university location, or other factors. Ann mentioned her patience and shared her perspective about how she learned to manage the faculty and staff recruitment and retention process. She continued to speak about other resources that would make the diversity office more robust:

I think we need infrastructure; we need to be able to develop more policies that will make it easier for us to do sort of innovative recruitment, retention efforts here at the university for faculty and staff. We need to look at structures and practices on how we advance people and they're beginning to look at those things. I think the Office of the VP for Inclusive Excellence is still new. It's not even three years old yet. People are still trying to figure out 'How should we work with them?' but most people have figured that out but that's a hurdle. The budget could be better and being a new office I know they had to do a lot of hiring. In the fall I'll have my full complement finally and people don't realize sometimes if you don't have your full complement of the staff, there are a lot of things that you can't engage in. And so one person will probably be here almost a year by then but the new person coming over, it's going to take some time for them to become acquainted with the university and the role of this position.

Susan approached the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff with a strategy. She identified partners who could provide access to potential candidates who were diverse in their academic fields. Finding ways to educate the academic deans and search committees on associations with diverse candidates was an opportunity to positively impact recruitment and retention:

I would focus on the faculty recruitment so that's been one of the areas I've had to learn, not just faculty I mean I know how to hire faculty, but recruitment of diverse faculty, where you know you have a plan and going go after recruiting people and not because and honestly not because there are specifically positions we want to put a Black person in this position, just recruiting like a broad brush of the University A and so we have that's been one of those areas where I have partnered with which was an easy partner, the Southern Regional Education Board and they have the doctoral scholars institute where annually they bring close to 700 African American Hispanic PHD students, so we go as an exhibitor, we didn't do that before I came to this role, we go as an exhibitor every year uh I didn't get new money to do it, I'm doing it out of my budget to go out so we go to wherever they are going, they go to 3 cities, Tampa, Virginia usually Arlington, and Atlanta, so we go and uh I have truly learned a lot about how to do that type of recruitment and how to work not just in terms of talking about recruitment of potential faculty members, but then how to work with my Deans back here on my campus so it's like hey I'm going really do this exciting don't you want to be apart, don't you want to pay for it [sarcastically] you know and the first couple years I took people in those units I took those associate deans in those units who I knew were really strong about diversity and inclusion.

The silos that exist on campuses are of no surprise to professionals who understand higher education. According to the participants individuals tend to be territorial within the institution; inherently hindering the ability of CDOs to learn processes or specific areas on campus. Mary shared a perspective that captures the consensus about silos on campus:

Silos...people being territorial. Not being invitational. Resistance to change.

Sometimes resources...the lack of resources or...having resources but the right ones.

Time. Sometimes it's the institutional will to do some things...on the one hand I think within the academy we talk about being cutting edge and innovative. Somehow with respect to this work, we've not been as cutting edge and innovative and as a result we see who suffers. And it's challenging because other factors that impede and I know we're talking about learning. Sometimes the barriers that people put up to the work...so busy doing that that it disrupts some of the more creative things that you could do and learn from because you're so busy wrestling in the mud over how do we ensure that search committees aren't discriminating against women who have children? Stuff that we should have gotten by a long time ago.

Territorial behavior still exists despite the relationships that are established, as depicted by Ann:

Oh, it's tough political. It's very political. As I stated earlier, this work...we have to work across administrative divisions...it's not limited to diversity work, it impacts supplier diversity, financial administration, looking at housing, that's in Student Affairs, work with the campus police, we have a health science campus, what's happening at the medical center. And so I'm working constantly at working across boundaries. And so you have to be a team player, you have to know a little bit about those areas but more

importantly, you have to be able to connect with people, that they want to see you when you call to make an appointment. I think the best part is when they're calling you and saying, 'Ann, we're about to start this initiative and I want to ask you questions about that' and so the politics of it is that in higher education, I think even in the corporate world, people are wedded to their areas and sometimes they don't want you interfering.

“A larger staff” (staffing issues). Adequate staffing is a concern among CDOs who work at large research I universities. Time dedicated to growing their professional learning strategy is limited because of inadequate staffing. For CDOs who have to juggle multiple tasks and focus on fundraising is an example of having someone relieving the CDO of a duty that overwhelms them in day-to-day work.

Susan talked about her desire to have additional staff. She realized the university's priority towards instructional needs because of her experience in higher education, in addition to being influenced by her faculty background. The response includes the important attribute of patience as a CDO. Learning the skill of patience is an attribute that is essential for CDOs because diversity issues may not be an institutional priority. Susan remarked:

...we need more people on my staff...and the reason I say that it's not a direct impede, but it impedes because I'm doing things that someone else should be doing but we just don't have the capacity in terms of people to do it you know, I make decisions and spend time looking up stuff on the web that I shouldn't be because I should have a larger staff and many of my counter parts at other institutions when I look at their flow, their org charts, if we had all these people we could change the world and I think that's the piece, but you know that people in institutions, and I know this are slow to create new positions to build more beauracracy, they need to be putting, you know in our school like many

others we need more lecturers in the classroom, we need more faculty and that's where the university is putting its resources and I understand that having been on the college level I really understand that and so I don't go around asking for it, I'm waiting, I'm waiting, I think it's going to come so I don't even have an ask on the table about that right now, I'm waiting it's going to come.

James talked about how much work the CDO must do and the why human resources (staffing) is important. He talked about the work required of the CDO and what could go lacking with inadequate staff:

Another challenge...certainly time, just having the time to focus and to do all the things because in roles like this, if you're really effective and if the institution is really committed and your work should really touch all aspects of the academic enterprise...really, if you think about it, you should be working with Admissions to help diversify the student body, you should be working with the provosts and deans to help diversify the faculty and should be working with HR to diversify staff, you would be working with the provosts, deans, faculty to infuse diversity into the curriculum you should be working with the finance and administration, business folks, and the facilities folks on how do we make sure that the campus is accessible for lawsuits and a welcoming, inclusive environment, both in terms of the physical spaces but also what we have reflected as a campus community, and then research...what type of research are we doing in a diversity space? So, there, it should really touch all aspects of the enterprise.

Human resources departments impact how much work can be accomplished by the institutional diversity office. The participants mentioned the need for more staff members to be an effective diversity executive; meaning they have professional staff to focus on specific areas.

Rather than expect the CDO to connect with all areas of the university and manage other tasks (e.g. fundraising, research, programming) there must be adequate staffing to reach full potential. Gladys discussed her interactions with other CDOs in the region and workshops for developing skills:

Strategies for implementing practices and procedures on campus...I've learned from so many different workshops, seminars but also just having hallway conversations that I have with people, the follow ups that I make with folks whether it be still at the conference or whether it be email have all been extremely beneficial in moving forward.

“Generate more resources” (funding). Budgets for institutional diversity range from millions of dollars to lower amounts at large universities. Learning how to adapt to budget issues meant learning how to fundraise for most CDOs. It was a skill that most participants had to learn to generate financial resources to be effective.

George mentioned funding needs and his solution was to learning fundraising. Additionally, he mentioned developing relationships with the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institute for Health (NIH). He learned fundraising techniques to fill the gaps of financial deficit that would support diversity efforts or special projects:

Well, I've learned that you have to discover and become savvy with things like fundraising and development, at least be in tune with that, trying to figure out what that's about because everything that you want to try to do is not necessarily going to be something that you can get state or operational funds for. You have to build relationships with different sectors, whether that's corporate, whether that's public engagement, NSF, NIH, those kinds of agencies. You have to explore those to leverage your programmatic support...so, you have to be savvy and fundraising is what I'd call it in development

work. I didn't really understand that when I got into this game that that was that important.

James also talked about learning fundraising work for institutional diversity efforts. He realized what he needed to learn to find funding:

Another learning around it is how do you engage in non-development work for diversity and inclusion? I think that's certainly almost becoming a core competency. And I think it's important, I've been doing quite a bit of that here. I did a lot of that when I was at [my previous institution]. I think it's important...people start to look differently especially if you get a major gift in support of diversity...to see that yeah, there are people out there, and why...they see that this is very important and they want to give to this because they understand the direction that we're going and they want to make sure that our students are prepared to live in and lead in a global and diverse world.; I think certainly...expectations that I generate more resources to help advance the work of diversity and inclusion and so certainly that influences...I need to know how to go out and seek funds from alumni and friends/companies and also just grant writing.

Learning the technique of fundraising is an on-the-job experience for CDOs. Despite their entry into the profession, some CDOs have to learn how to generate funds for general operations or special projects.

Learn from Experience and Circumstances

There were supportive structures for CDOs to continuously learn. The support for professional learning is in the form of funding for professional development and the opportunity to be involved in other strategic areas of the university. First, the participants mentioned having

some funding to attend conferences or join professional associations. Second, serving on committees or leading a campus-wide initiative exposes CDOs to areas outside of diversity work.

Experiential learning. The participants further discussed the professional learning process as something they created along their path. Experiential learning was a very common method for learning, whether it was current or previous experiences. James talked about how his experience has prepared him for the CDO role:

...then also my professional experience, I've been working almost 20 years doing diversity and inclusion work...working first primarily with students of color and broadening that. When I worked in the School of Public Health, I oversaw all of the diversity efforts there, to and a little bit even in my first job, I did quite a bit, but most of the interaction was with suit of color and then certainly as my role as Assistant Vice President, the units that reported directly to me were LBGT Center, the Multicultural Center, the Women's Center but I also did a lot of pre-K/12 kinds of stuff, a lot of community engagement, external relations kind of pieces, donor stewardship assisting with development efforts for the area. So, the professional positions that I have held have also prepared me for the role.

Richard talked about his experience and the learning for him:

My main message to you is that there aren't many learning structures except experience. You learn the hard way. You learn by trying. And you can ask your colleagues that you trust about specific things and get an idea of what they think about it. But I'm pretty unimpressed with the whole entire enterprise of sort of executive training, leadership training, all of that to the extent that I've seen it hasn't felt all that helpful to me. Experience has been super helpful. And you hope that you don't get too many hard

knocks in that school. For me, it's been pretty good. It's been a pleasant experience and I do feel like I learned a whole lot. Now I know a whole lot. Now, I plan to try to help the next person coming in with what I learned to the extent that they ask me but, again, I doubt there will be any formal attempt to pass that knowledge along.

Learning while being a CDO based on experience and current situations is a part of the process. Gladys mentioned the value on continuous learning and exposure to others who can share knowledge because she is in a learning community:

And the factors that support my learning is recognizing that as much as I want to believe that I know it all, I don't. So, that's where I think the humility part is. And you live in a learning community. And if you understand that is where you are, you have an obligation to expand your own knowledge and fortunately there are brilliant people here that are just as committed to our goals.

“Network of resources” (professional development). Professional development in the form of workshops, conferences, and associations was mentioned by each participant. Susan, Ann, and Gladys also mentioned how important it was for their staff to be exposed to professional development resources as well. Richard did not see the need for engaging with professional networks outside of NADOHE. He believes that he could learn what he needed through experience and talking with other CDOs who work at similar type universities. James mentioned the support he received for professional development:

...certainly as a senior leader of the chancellor's cabinet I have a budget that also includes professional development that allows me to do some of those things. As a cabinet we always have an annual Cabinet Retreat where we discuss issues that are critical to the institution and it's not necessarily focused on diversity but there is always

something or I'll find a way to fuse it in there, there's going to be some kind of discussion around some aspect of diversity it might not be diversity broadly but it might be some aspect.

Harry shared a similar experience and it connected to what other participants perceived as institutional support for professional development opportunities:

...there is a budget set aside for professional development and so a few conferences a year. I'm sure if I wanted to get some type of certificate or take a course of some sort, I would be able. That's valuable even if it's for networking purposes and not necessarily a formal learning experience knowing that you have a network of resources around you that can be supportive is valuable even if you don't call on them on a regular basis.

Gladys talked about an issue with her provost and the benefit of professional development. While the president of the university understood and supported conference attendance, Gladys's provost did not share that perspective. Gladys recognized the timing and advocated for professional development:

The provost is of the mindset that in order to the work to get done we have to be physically on campus at all times. The president is of the opposite belief. He knows that I need to be engaging in professional development, he knows that I need to be engaging in donors, he knows that I should be engaging with partners, all of those things, because we have a chicken and egg situation at our campus. And so I'd say the reporting is a challenge, and It's not that it would be at every institution that this would be same but my particular provost is of the belief that in order to get the work done you have to physically be here which I believe is very antiquated way with all of the contribution tools online, using Skype and teleconference...I mean, there are so many ways to get work done that I

think it's very antiquated to believe that in order to get the work done you have physically be face to face with someone and so that's a challenge.

“Learned so many things” (learning new skills). Susan, Bob, Ann, and George shared narratives about being involved in other areas of the university. They leveraged the opportunity to learn about other systems and departments on campus as the CDO. Ann specifically talked about learning medical terms because of the medical component at her current university. George mentioned being involved as a senior leader for a major campus initiative. Both examples explain how CDOs are successful in learning to be effective.

Susan learned skills in a role where she was a member of the Dean's staff prior to becoming the CDO. She developed an interest in diversity work over the span of her career. Her narrative describes how CDOs move through their career gaining skills that are useful for a diversity executive:

Being an assistant to the dean of graduate Studies and Testing at previous institutions, working at HBCU, community colleges, small liberal arts institutions. Research one institutions, flagship institutions and now urban complex institutions with a medical university, I've learned so many things through all of those...writing grants for workforce development. I always took the opportunities and people brought me under their wing to help me expand my skill set.

Ann also talked about learning while working at her university by participating as a budget committee member. In her current role she learns about different sectors of the university due to the type of university (e.g., medical school, law school, etc.). She is also learning about areas she never considered she would be involved with in her career:

Coming here serving on the budget review committee, I got to learn about all of the entities on campus and what their budgets looked like and what their challenges were around the budget situation. Being at an institution that had the RCM senate based model coming here, we have a decentralized budget system and so you're constantly learning through the different environments that you're in...I'm learning more about medical center in the health system that I knew. I'm having an opportunity to work on some things about supplier diversity and how people perceive a minority SWAM we call it, Small Minority of Women-Owned Companies, supplier, I mean, hiring them to do work. George shared an example of leading a university-wide project outside of the diversity office. The project gave him an opportunity to show his abilities beyond diversity work:

I think people have to perceive you as being legitimate, credible, sincere, basically...everybody knows when you come in, you've got an agenda. I got here and in twelve months after I was here, I took on a role to lead an assessment of H Univ. family-friendly...how family-friendly were H U's official policies that support work/life balance? So, people said, 'Wow, he produced this report, man, shit he knows what's up!' I didn't do it, I put the team together to make it happen. So, I came here, to be quite honest without perceiving to be egotistical, I came here as a pretty high visible...and I told them when I came, I said, 'Look, I don't hold my tongue, I speak with rational thought but I'm very pointed.' So, soon after my reputation was 'Dang!...he came in and told us.' So, yeah, you've got to establish credibility, people have to believe that you are genuine and those are just attributes that you have to have or develop to be effective and for people to receive your ideas. I think I can weigh in on a lot of conversations and

whether they ask me or not, I will. I'm not foolish but I know you shouldn't just sit around and not ever say anything.

The universities where the participants worked did offer support and challenges in the professional learning for CDOs. Politics, territorialism, staffing, and funding were problematic areas that impacted the learning of CDOs. The contextual issues presented situations that limited or distracted what a CDO should have learned if the challenges were limited. Despite the challenges there existed the support for professional learning. Funding for professional development and exposure to other professional experiences were strategies to support learning.

Using Professional Learning to “*Move the Needle*” on Institutional Diversity

The third major theme reveals the outcomes of professional learning. Learning how to advance diversity work involves utilizing skills learning prior to and during the CDO role. The CDO begins the professional learning process by understanding the university, then learns how best to move the needle, and finally uses the learning to be an effective diversity executive. Being effective means evolving the campus towards a more inclusive environment.

Employ Professional Skills to Be Effective

Susan shared details from her experience of being informal with another campus executive. She invited the colleague to lunch and decided to make it a friendly lunch, as opposed to a lunch to discuss business:

...it has a lot to do with about building relationships and partnerships that might not be not translate exactly the same into some other geographic context but here that is so important and so in turns of the I think the soft skills I can't say enough about those about how important they are for example I went, I took a colleague to lunch the other day cause she is retiring from University A...as I was preparing and getting ready to go to

lunch I was like you know, we had a two-hour lunch we didn't even talk about her office or mine we talked personal because I realized that so much of what we have done in my interaction with her has been about what my office needs or what she can partner and we've done. I think that right now it might be better just to remind her of the friendship first, so we had a friendship we had a friend lunch. Not even a colleague lunch, we had a friend lunch and I picked it up and I said, she was like no, and I was like no just congratulations on your retirement I'm really excited for you, and walked away and asked for nothing and mentioned nothing. I feel like I made an investment in that, you know and I also enjoyed lunch you know it was good it was fun but its good not to talk shop, but I, but that was a very intentional move on my part and I try to do that and think about it not just in terms of what I can get but in terms of the relationships we're building and that's important here, and it mi- it might not but having said, in learning that and I continue to learn that and when to ask and when not to make the ask and to be like Susan just shut up, you came in here you had something you wanted to pitch...I don't feel it, to go in learning to go with that it's that gut instinct in some things I've learned, because I think at first it was kind of like oh I'm having lunch with the Provost I need to let her know everything, but no I'm going to ask her what about, are you still moving you got boxes unpacked in your basement exactly...

Building consensus. According to Susan, investing personal time with constituents is necessary for CDOs. It goes beyond colleague or business conversations, and getting to the core of individuals. Susan shared more about her experience:

My style is more consensus building and collaborative with very strategic, strategic collaboration and consensus building, but more to go in and say look this is what it looks

like what can we do so we went into early on we went into early on into some colleges that had very little diversity and said yea we'll talk to your staff about your faculty about um the issues and not go in and say you don't have diversity what are you going to do about it; People do things they assume are in their best interest, so how do we determine what's in your best interest that in terms of your practice, your policies, your procedures that I view as discriminatory and how can I show you a tweak still is going to be in your best interest and whatever that interest is, so that's the way I view history and that's why I love that time period...you know and I did a lot on women's history like with white women's southern history, kind of identify, if it isn't in their best interest they could care less about color...its self-interest, and so then I take that over to diversity and when people are acting in ways that I think are counter to inclusion on this campus. There's something in that action that they perceive to be in the best interest of them this school their college their unit their office, and so I love having that conversation to see why do you do this, so help me to understand so that I...so that we can begin the conversation of determining how inclusion can, you can um have processes and procedures around inclusion that still help you meet your needs and your goals, and I think that's why that piece to me is much more effective than you know kind of shaming someone into something that, because that's going to be short lived, they're going to wait they- go- you know they're going to appease you until they can get you out of their office out of their sight or do just enough so the Provost isn't going to be breathing down their neck and then they're going to move on – when you can build a long standing relationship and they say you know what she kind of helped me work through that for my group so and that was really helpful for my organization.

Communicating diversity. Communication is a huge component for CDOs because they each discussed how best to share the message. The concern around communication was managed by moving into developing those necessary relationships, but understanding the need to do more, according to Richard:

I realized late on that you need to be a much bigger part of learning that I had gotten which is communications, what you put out, where you put it out, how often you put it out, what form it takes, who it's aimed at, just paying attention to what people are hearing and are they hearing about successes or are they just hearing about the bad things? That whole issue of communications, we need to do a much better job on that, it's something that I'm leaving undone but my organization is much more aware of it now, we have a communications person and we started to do better. But, yeah, that was a big one.

Knowing how to communicate diversity with the internal constituents allows the CDO to better understand how to advance institutional diversity. Understanding how people perceive diversity, learning the potential hazards, and leveraging knowledge all come together as CDOs interpret the trenches of practice. Mary explained:

Knowing how to market, how to negotiate, how to get to an agreement and a win-win. And I think of the many skills that I like to believe that I have, that's probably the one that has served me very well. It is the art of negotiation and it's because you're doing that every single day. It is...what was that old 'How to Win Friends and Influence People'...now, I'm dating myself but...I think it is always acting with integrity. I think that has been my own way of being....it's a thing that I always maintain and I think as a result of that people will recognize that. It's distinct truth...yeah, I can play the game, I know how to be stealth and if I want to, I could do certain things...whether through

purposeful manipulation of circumstances or create them but it's recognizing sometimes that's what you're doing and if you feel that you've got to play it that way, you just don't take yourself to far.

Ann reiterated the institutional needs that impact the communication, connecting, and adapting:

I think it depends on the institution, how do you engage the president more.... And he said 'Make sure you get the right people onboard with you;...I don't really have a challenge engaging my president...and making sure I have the right people with me, Oh, another thing...and I think I always knew this...because one of my colleagues who was a CDO who is now University A president and we shared the same philosophy, that a CDO is a senior administrator. Everything you do you carry yourself as a senior administrator.

People need to see you as a leader. Sometimes people can be kind of afraid of that, too. But when you walk into a room where you frame your messages, it shouldn't be any different from any other senior administrator. And I think in order to do that you need to be abreast of the university as a whole of the trends that are happening across the country.

Harry's account about institutional diversity being a campus-wide initiative is how CDOs believe this work should spread on campus. It is not a one person effort, but it takes building and maintaining relationships, in addition to communicating with the campus community:

I've learned that the entire burden of diversity doesn't rest on my shoulders, I think that's really important for all CDO's to understand is that you're not alone and that if you're on a campus where...although you may feel like it from time to time, many universities are willing to come together not just in crisis but all the time to make the university a better place and they want to take ownership of a great campus as well although they might not

have diversity in their title...and I think that's probably one of the greatest learning experiences that I've had throughout my career is understanding that people do pull together if you built enough of a relationship with them beforehand.

Adapt to an Evolving Role through Professional Learning

Much of the learning to develop skills has been in other professional positions. In fact, communicating with various campus partners is something learned along each participant's professional path.

“An evolving role” – always changing. Susan discussed the complexities of the CDO role that may seem confusing to some. She referred to what other participants named “an evolving role.” Susan talked about how her role has changed over time:

...depending upon how the role is written at the institution what is going to be the portfolio of the individual, and I say that considering the fact that the portfolio for this position has shifted and changed since I have been in it...so for example when I first came into this role, hiring and recruiting and hiring diverse faculty was not really something this position, working around issues of gender in term of women faculty and staff as well as for students was not something that this position had done – it has since changed and those are two areas that are in the portfolio of this position, so having said that it really, the institution has to look at how they are writing the job description and what they hope the chief diversity officer will do. At some institutions some of the underrepresented student organizations are actually in the chief diversity officer's portfolio at some institutions the equal opportunity office is in so what you find is that it depends on the institution.

The CDO is a position that evolved due to the institutional needs, according to Jane:

The more you know, the more you're ready for it even though you may have been hired as one thing, you never know how they'll add to your job. Understand that your job in and of itself will evolve while you're in it. It is not a static job. If it is then you need to figure out if that's for you because being a diversity officer it has to morph with the needs of those that you're serving.

George agreed that the position is evolving, but that CDOs should have a general portfolio of knowledge to maintain good decisions and to remain credible:

I think that in today's world that the end result is that you have to be very accomplished in a number of arenas including with the research. You need to be able to make the case in a very succinct way to anybody who is in a position of affecting policy why we should be doing something. For example, why should we worry about the lack of women in STEM today? Why should we worry about the lack of students of color in STEM disciplines today? Or generally, why should we worry that 63.8 percent of all black students receiving college degrees today are women? So, that requires a bit of competency in the research realm that is important to be able understand issues and to make informed evidence based policy projections about what you should be doing. And so that's important. And I think having that perspective and to be facile with what I call the impactful arenas of substance such the legal arena. So, this isn't like you take somebody off the street and...So, these positions aren't the 'good old boy' appointments and they shouldn't expected to be positions that carry the water. They should be expected to be leadership roles within institutions of higher education so that you serve the institutions and social interests in your capacity.

Skill acquisition. George is one of few CDOs who have grown in the profession due to his longevity in the field. He believed that skills are developed over time and that CDOs, but that the professional learning should be an intentional process:

The vice president for Student Affairs, the vice president for Academic Affairs, the vice president for Business Affairs, the vice president for [Institutional] Technology...the Chief Information Officer...CIOs...all of those fields are growing and maturing and are having to do the same things, so, your chief diversity officer should be the same kind of pathway and should be very interconnected with the rest of the organizational leadership structure of the institution. Those are skills that are acquired over time and so I did my training as an assistant vice chancellor at another university, I had a portfolio, I had a boss that was vice chancellor that I reported to, an associate provost role that I reported to. I even did a stint of reporting directly to the Chancellor. So, I've learned the territory. And it's all of these skills were instrumental in my emerging as the candidate of choice here because I had demonstrated competencies in a lot of arenas including faculty improvement, faculty diversity, staff diversity, student diversity, climate change leadership...and those are not things that you think about. We did a climate assessment here and I led it in my first two years, this is the actual result of it here. And so when I got here I devised the strategy, I worked with the provost to legitimize the process, co-chaired the oversight group, worked with all of the task groups to develop the foci research questions and at institutional research did all of the mechanical part of this, do the survey, administer it, analyze it so that it was independently done, we didn't do it internal because I know people would say, 'The Office of Diversity cooked up all the data set.' You don't notice diversity anywhere on there, right?...the reason I didn't is

that's not a diversity survey although it allows you to look at things by demographic and so I can tell by looking at people's experiences with the interactions with their faculty, with their colleagues, with the chairs, the climates in the school of the unit, climate at University H, issues around diversity and inclusion, differences by gender rank, professor rank, gender, race, ethnicity...and I can aggregate it any way I want to and look at patterns of differences by women, by rank, by race, by discipline...that's diversity at its finest and not one time do you see diversity in there. That was the strategy I did this twice at another university and it worked very well. So, these are skills, these aren't just...not everybody can devise and develop a process and oversee that process to produce the result yeah, so go back to the original point of this is that...these are pieces to this profession that, I think, you be good your job acquire competencies...

Skill acquisition is a pieced-together puzzle used to develop a portfolio of knowledge to be an effective CDO. Passion alone does not account for the skills needed to work in the trenches of institutional diversity. Developing a professional learning process that acknowledges continuous learning was mentioned by Ann:

So, I think those are some things that I've learned and that you always have to be a lifelong learner. Lifelong learning is important to this...trying to be in the know, that's a hard piece for an administrator because you don't know whether they're excluding you or not but you want to be able to connect with people... 'Well, what's happening on this front? Can you tell me anything? I need to know those kinds of things.' And like I said, just be open to learning...and I have not had a problem with this because I think it's part of my transparency...being transparent as a leader but also telling people when you don't know something, saying, 'I don't know but I can get back to you with that'...and don't

fill all of the time talking. I like to engage in and hear what the other people have to say.

I think at presentations and workshops I'd rather because they want to be heard, too.

Summary

In this chapter I presented four themes in response to the research questions. The themes emerged from interviews data from 10 CDOs who work at large research universities. The first theme was about CDOs comprehending the complexities of the university. That involved learning about the institution and how to be a diversity executive in a university setting. Universities are complex organizations and CDOs seek out strategic areas on campus to “inject” diversity into the fabric of the university. It is a strategic approach to infusing diversity into the “DNA” of the campus. Mastering the skills and abilities necessary for diversity executives also is connected to learning the institutional culture. Developing trust and being perceived as credible impacts how constituents conceptualize the CDO. Learning the unknown was mentioned by the participants to refer to learning the details of the diversity executive role.

The second theme was about CDOs taking responsibility for their professional learning. The participants were self-motivated to seek out opportunities for learning. Participants mentioned self-directed, experiential, and informal learning strategies. Third, the institutional supports and challenges are presented as the next theme. The challenges that impacted learning were politics, territorialism, staffing, and funding. Institutional support for learning included professional development opportunities and learning new skills based on on-campus opportunities.

Fourth, the final theme is “moving the needle” to refer to making progress. The participants discussed how they used their learning to be effective and adapt to their role (based on the context – the university). Professional knowledge and skills are utilized in practice to

move the needle towards inclusive excellence. Additionally, learning to adapt to the university context through continuous learning was discussed by the participants. Adapting to the specific university context was mentioned by the participants, as each campus has unique needs.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS & DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the professional learning of Chief Diversity Officers (CDOs) who work in higher education. Four research questions were used to frame this study:

1. What do CDOs identify as their learning needs?
2. What strategies do CDOs utilize for learning?
3. How do institutional factors inhibit or support CDOs' learning?
4. What is the impact of professional learning for CDOs working in higher education?

A purposeful sample of 10 CDOs who work at large research universities were participants in an interview that lasted one and one half hours. After the interviews were recorded they were transcribed and later analyzed. Each interview transcript was analyzed individually, and then collectively using the constant comparative method. Findings were derived from the data and presented in the previous chapter. This chapter is a presentation about the conclusions derived from the findings and framed by the literature.

This chapter presents the conclusions of the study based on the findings. A discussion about the implications and limitations is provided as well. The Chief Diversity Officer profession is growing and the findings indicate how learning leads to effective practice. I was inspired by how candid the participants were about their experience as the CDO at their

respective universities. Additionally, it was interesting to learn how they overcome unforeseen (and unmentioned) challenges to “move the needle” on institutional diversity.

Professional learning was selected to frame this study because CDOs work with specific academic (or formal) training that does not necessarily include diversity. A CDO is also working in a large organization where diversity has traditionally taken a back seat to other issues. Despite the attention given to diversity by appointing a CDO there is still a lack of intentionality for its importance. There are three conclusions used to discuss the impact of professional learning for CDOs as they seek to be effective at large research universities. Finally, the implications for theory and practice are presented to ground the study. The limitations of the study section highlight issues that were present during the research and development of the study. A discussion follows where I offer insight into the overall interpretation of the meaning for this research.

Conclusions

Four conclusions were drawn from this study. Based on the findings, the conclusions are, Chief Diversity Officers: (a) are sensitized to diversity and social justice based on early life experiences; (b) are in contested and marginalized roles, (c) are purposeful about their professional learning, and (d) negotiate the university environment to advance diversity on campus. This section provides details about each conclusion, along with implications for theory and practice.

Conclusion One: Sensitized to Diversity and Social Justice Based on Early Life Experiences

The CDOs’ discussion about developing an interest for diversity was consistent among the participants. The narratives about early childhood memories or some other experience suggested they had a special perspective for changing the status quo. George mentioned his

collegiate experience when he noticed the lack of Black and minority students in student leader roles on campus. Susan's experience as a cultural studies scholar was inspired by her life as a young girl. Pittard's (2010) notion of developing an early interest for diversity is confirmed. Based on this data and research CDOs develop an appreciation for diversity work due to an experience that inspires a vision. Additionally, CDOs evolve (learn over time) with the craft of being a diversity officer using professional learning and tie in their prior experiences (Price, 2008; Pittard, 2010).

Personal and professional experiences have an influence on someone's career according to Humphrey (2007). Other people or experiences provide encouragement and professional guidance as was the case with CDOs. All of the participants had a career path that would eventually lead to a CDO role. Most entered through multicultural affairs – a unit that is closely related to diversity (and often confused). Others come to the role from a policy or legal background. Each person worked from their own set of theories (Humphrey, 2007), rooted in their academic training and professional learning experiences.

Conclusion Two: Contested and Marginalized Roles

The participants discussed the need to validate themselves as valuable to the overall university. Each CDO brought a unique background and set of experiences; hence they practice using their own framework because of the absence of a common approach in the field. There are some CDOs who have a higher education background, while others may come from the corporate, legal, or non-profit areas. Furthermore, the academic training that each CDO shaped how they approach their work as a diversity executive. Within the university the CDOs had to prove themselves as credible despite having the academic and professional credentials.

Confirming their executive position. The CDO's relied on status, persuasion and symbols of power when they situate the issues of "campus climate, infusing diversity into the curriculum, faculty development and other diversity matters top priority" (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2008, p. 4). This study confirms that CDOs to work with various departments and units across campus to infuse diversity within the fabric of the institutional culture. The data for this study validates the research about CDOs being engaged in learning competencies and skills to render them effective executives (Maltbia, 2001). The findings confirm that CDOs are members of the president's cabinet (executive leadership team), which requires a set of competencies and political acumen (Pittard, 2010). The CDO is also involved with the recruitment of faculty, staff, and students or the systems involved in those processes (Green, 2008; Gichuru, 2010). The data suggests that CDOs are impactful (and arguably effective) as catalysts, educators, persuaders, and facilitators in the recruitment and retention process (Green, 2008).

There are many factors embedded in a university environment that CDOs encounter. Understanding the factors associated with being a diversity executive in higher education contexts required them to reflect on their background and experiences to construct how to best interpret campus diversity issues. The relationship with the president and/or provost was noted as necessary by the participants. Leveraging the authority with the key leaders prepares the CDO to engage with sacred processes like retention and recruitment of faculty and other constituents. The data from this study aligned with the research by Williams and Wade-Golden (2007) should work closely with the president and campus leaders in order to effectively engage with campus issues to successfully navigate the environment.

The CDO role "is seemingly unorthodox" in a university structure and "will be met with resistance and opposition," according to Pittard (2010). Resistance and opposition were

mentioned as barriers to effectiveness by the participants. In addition, the campus community interprets the CDO different because it is a new executive position within the organizational structure. University environments are different based on the people involved, thus most CDOs don't know what to expect. Based on the data CDOs are held to different standards than other executives because of the ambiguity attached to the position. Furthermore, the power/authority granted a CDO is limited, hence leveraging that authority through the president is vital. Green (2008) presented research about the importance of collaborating to get work done with faculty, staff, and other campus constituents. It is common for CDOs to identify key relationships with the faculty senate chair, influential leaders, and other constituents on varying levels of the university. The strategy for CDOs is collaboration, but proving the worth and work of the diversity officer. Other campus executives also have their set of challenges, yet most have positional authority or historical foundations that enable them to navigate the campus with limited challenges.

Positionality impacts how campus constituents perceive the validity of the CDO. The majority of CDOs are racial minorities or women, which adds more opportunities for resistance or questioning their ability (Nixon, 2010). The data suggested that women and people of color experience challenges as a CDO because of their social identities (Nixon, 2010). It seemed as if CDOs positionality situated them as culturally incongruent with the other executives. Investing personal time with other executives or being overly engaged in off-campus socials suggested that CDOs put in extra work to be treated equal. Validating their role as an executive was one aspect of making their role relevant, but demonstrating their ability to be a fully integrated member of the campus community presented the extra work for CDOs that was unique to their executive status.

Conclusion Three: Chief Diversity Officers are Purposeful about their Professional Learning

Learning has been a mode of developing additional skills or competencies for professionals in practice. Lifelong learning that goes beyond the classroom space is most important for professionals who seek to expand their knowledge as well, according to Cervero (2000). Professional learning is used in this study to discuss how the individual learner (the CDO) engages with developmental (or educational) opportunities to create knowledge. Daley states (2000) that professionals who engage with continuing professional education are exposed to new information to add to existing knowledge. Research about professional learning indicate how the context, experience, and the learner (the CDO) work together to enhance or add to current knowledge (Humphrey, 2007; Rinaldi, 2007; Harrison, 2010; Pittard, 2010). This section provides a discussion about the theoretical framework used for this study. Adult learning theories were used to discuss the informal, incidental and experiential learning to elucidate professional learning.

Optimal professional learning. Daley (2000) describes professional learning as the process of developing competencies to be an effective practitioner. According to Reitzug (2002), five modern forms of professional development include training, contextual, networks, developmental, and coaching. Cervero (1988) suggests an integrated approach to professional learning by incorporating actual experiences that occur within the context of work with professional development activities. The CDOs professional learning encompassed attributes of individual, environment, and experiences to create a mosaic of knowledge (Dailey, 1997, 2001). The CDOs used informal, incidental, and experiential learning to develop their own customized mosaic for professional learning.

The model offered by Sheckley, Kehrhahn, Bell & Grenier (2008) uses key attributes, individual attributes, and environmental affordances work to provide a framework for optimal professional learning. Figure 4 is an illustration of the adapted optional professional learning model with the factors that shape the learning.

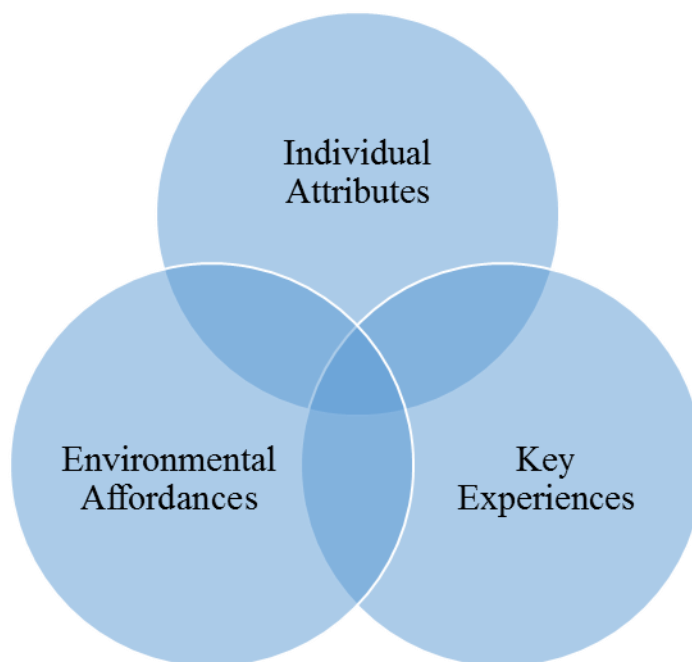


Figure 4. Adapted Trio model of adult professional learning. (Sheckley, B., Kehrhahn, M., Bell, A., & Grenier, R, 2008).

The data aligns with the model presented in Figure 1. Individual attributes emerged from the narratives about what CDOs needed to know, their self-regulated learning, and staying engaged throughout the campus environment. The participants discussed needing to know the university culture and how to be a diversity executive in that context. They were responsible for identifying opportunities that best fit their learning needs; supporting Rinaldi's (2007) claim that professionals (learners) choose their own learning. Based on the findings it was common for CDOs to approach their work based on their academic training. The majority of the participants

became CDOs after working as a student affairs professional; a career that requires a high-level connection to students on campus. Participants who had a student affairs background tended to be intentional about interacting with students in their role as the CDO. Other participants did not discuss intentional strategies for the student connection, but they understood the importance of the students' voice. Participants approached their work with their academic discipline and professional experiences to shape their lens. This discussion links back to the idea about how CDOs scaffold their learning (Harrison, 2010) based on professional experience.

The *National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education* (NADOHE) is the official professional organization for CDOs who work in higher education. Organizations like NADOHE are spaces for CDOs to share ideas and have a safe-space to have conversations with similar professionals. Pittard (2010) mentions NADOHE as the primary professional association for CDOs in higher education. Harrison (2010) discusses communities of practice to describe organizations like NADOHE. Other professional associations and conferences are based in academic specific areas (e.g. business academic conference, education research conference) or other functional areas (e.g. legal conference, student affairs association). Participation in professional associations and conferences was mentioned by all of the participants as a professional learning strategy. Organizations and conferences provided opportunities to network, reflect, and learn in a community of diversity executives.

Informal and incidental learning theory frame how learning occurs without a formal structured approach. Informal learning transpires in almost any context with an expectation that knowledge will be gained (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Incidental learning is unintentional occurrence of a conversation with someone, tapping into a memory, or any type of incident that offers new knowledge (Marsick & Watkins, 2001). Humphrey (2007) suggests that principal's

most common form of learning was informal. Informal learning also heavily impacted the learning for African American pastors in the context of practice (Harrison, 2010).

Informal and incidental modes of learning were mentioned by participants throughout this study. The CDOs who worked at universities engaged with other campus executives, various campus constituents, and external constituents to informally learn about the university. The day-to-day learning through practice offered multiple opportunities for incidental learning – an unintentional learning moment. Another example of informal learning was the mentorship that some of the participants discussed. That same mentorship would provide opportunities for incidental learning from conversations or reflection prompted through the mentorship relationship. Research about mentorship confirm its informal underpinning and describe the mentor as a guide (Harrison, 2010).

Learning from experience contributed heavily to CDOs professional learning as is inserted throughout the data. Experience was mentioned as a valuable learning tool, which support the concept that experience is an exceptional teacher. Kolb (1984) states that experience translates into learning when the process involves a concrete experience, reflection on the experience, an abstract concept is developed, and then practical experimentation. Jarvis (2001) expands on Kolb's model by including context. Two types of learning from experience are nonreflective learning (repeating an experience or doing what is told), and reflective learning (intentionally interacting and thinking of practice as it is happening and following the occurrence). Experiential learning frames how CDOs learned from previous and current professional encounters to scaffold knowledge. Research about experiential learning suggest that professionals either enhance learned knowledge using internships or similar opportunities to learn (Zorga, 2002; Harrison, 2008).

There are not formal internship programs for professional diversity officers. Most CDOs rely on their academic achievement status (having a degree) and other administrative experiences as professional learning sources. The participants discussed how important experiences are from previous roles, in addition to the current role as CDO for professional learning. Two participants specifically mentioned learning from experience as a primary source of learning. Additionally, the participants confirmed Jarvis's claim (and others) about context. Each university is different with a unique set of cultural issues for a CDO to navigate. Learning from experience is foundational to CDOs who encounter unique circumstances in their role as the institutional diversity executive.

Conclusion Four: Negotiate the University Environment to Advance Diversity on Campus

The history of higher education in the United States is stained with the legacy of discrimination. Many universities were vulnerable to the legacy of discrimination that still exist, but less visible. Diversity has grown to be an asset to universities to seek to remain competitive and to enhance student learning (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Petersen, & Allen, 1999). The CDOs encountered environmental influences that were consistent with Nixon's (2013) research; CDOs learned how to navigate the environment despite the marginalization they experience. This study also confirmed that CDOs acquired knowledge they references as they practiced in a multifaceted environment (Harrison, 2010)

Learning how to be an effective diversity executive. Williams and Wade-Golden (2007) highlight seven competencies for an effective CDO that include: (a) a technical mastery of diversity issues, (b) being politically savvy, (c) the ability to cultivate a common vision, (d) in-depth perspective of organizational change, (e) sophisticated relational abilities, (f) an understanding of higher education culture, and (g) be results oriented. Using the seven

competencies offered by Williams and Wade-Golden is a framework to approach practice and implement change on campus (Green, 2008). The participants mentioned a variety of learning needs that included understanding policy, developing interpersonal skills, and other competencies. Enhancing current knowledge was discussed as well when the participants talked about pulling on prior experiences.

Cox and Beale (1997) present a developmental model to explain the process of learning. The model is used as a framework to explain the professional learning for CDOs from awareness, to understanding and then action. The model begins with an awareness or understanding what needs to be learned. Next, the process of understanding is where opportunities for learning (developing new knowledge) is employed. The action phase is when new knowledge is tested or practiced to validate its effectiveness. A new awareness is the outcome of the process. Figure 2 is an illustration of the Cox and Beale model.

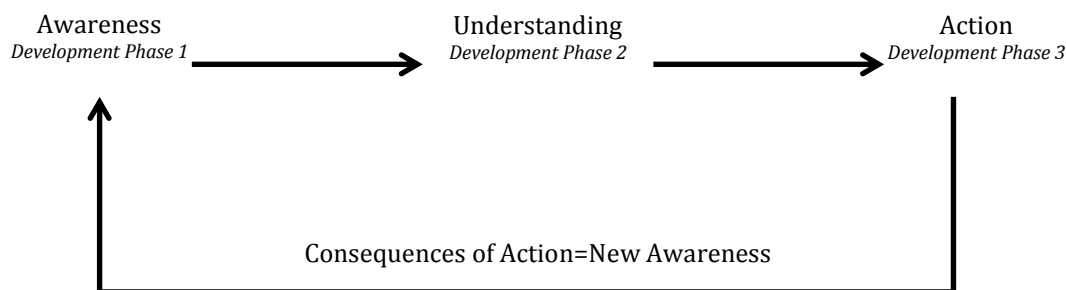


Figure 3. Process of learning diversity competence model. Reprinted with permission of the publisher. From *Developing competency to manage diversity* (p. 5), Copyright 1997 by Taylor Cox, Jr., and Ruby L. Beale. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., San Francisco, CA. All rights reserved. www.bkconnection.com

The participants' professional learning validated this process. Learning about policy and fundraising are just two examples of how the Cox and Beale (1997) model explained CDOs

learning. In this case, CDOs identified their need to learn policy, fundraising, or another competency. Next the CDO developed a strategy to learn the competency. Eventually the CDO would test their new learning and adopt new knowledge for practice. This process occurred for a variety of learning needs as discussed by the participants. The outcome of the process led to the participants being more effective because they learned new and enhanced current knowledge.

Learning in the workplace was perceived by employers as a method for improving employees' work performance. Mott (2000) offers another perspective of workplace learning by placing the professional (the learner) as the priority. This study approaches workplace learning from the perspective of the professional learning within the context of the university. Learning in the context of the university introduces the intricacies that are situated within a unique context.

The participants relied on their university environment to learn the intricacies that make it unique. Each university presents its own set of intricate culturally specific issues and each has its own needs. Learning to be a CDO at one university will contrast the experience at another institution. The participants discussed learning how to be a CDO, which meant developing influential relationships; that begins with knowing where to begin based on the institution. Additionally, some participants discussed learning based on having special departments at their university (e.g. special science lab, medical or law school).

Implications

The outcomes of this study have implications for theory, practice, and future research. Theoretical implications for this study support the concept of the Trio Model of Adult Professional Learning. The model connects to adult learning theory based on the three components that combine to form optimal professional learning. The three theories used to frame this study are the same theories that link to the model used to discuss professional

learning. A second implication for theory is the development of an operational theory for CDOs at higher education institutions. The participants confirmed (based on the data) how they use theories from previous experiences and those learned through academic training. With the profession expanding, so will the need to move closer to a theoretical framework to strengthen the foundation by providing a common way for practice.

Practical implications highlight the importance of recognizing the diversity executive just as others are acknowledged. Another implication for practice is to provide adequate resources for CDOs to engage in continuous professional learning. There is evidence throughout this study that suggested the unequal treatment of CDO. The participants mentioned feeling as if they have to prove their worth and accept other roles on campus to demonstrate basic competencies. The data also suggested that CDOs have to do additional work to be perceived as a campus executive. Additional work might involve spending extra time (personal time) to network with influential leaders or engaging with campus constituents on all levels of the organizational structure. The CDO role is similar to the work of the president as far as visibility and engagement; it proves the notion that the CDO can be labeled “the diversity president.”

Implications for future research include extending this study into other colleges and universities. Smaller and medium sized institutions have a smaller sphere of complex issues that may or may not present the same results. Based on the data from this study I am curious to understand if CDOs at other types of institutions have similar experiences. Another implication for future research is the comparison of corporate and higher education CDOs. Understanding the common areas of the two types of diversity executives uncovers the connection and commonalities across the profession. It would begin a conversation about diversity executives in organizations that has historically marginalized diversity.

Implications for Theory

The Trio Model of Adult Professional Learning proposed by Sheckley, Lehrhahn, Bell and Grenier (2008) is guided by informal and incidental, experiential, and workplace learning theories. The three theories frame the study through the model. The individual attributes of CDOs is tied to the participants' learning needs and motivated by their intention to be effective. Informal and incidental learning come through networking, mentorship, and professional opportunities to share ideas or challenges. The cultural context of the university is present when CDOs are engaged in self-directed or other informal learning strategies. Incidental learning theory was validated by CDOs who learn unintentionally from a situation or encounter. This study also validates Marsick and Watkins (2001) claim that informal and incidental learning are nonlinear approaches to understanding the process of making knowledge meaningful. The participants moved through their cycle of learning that starts when they become a CDO at a new university.

The environmental affordances circle of the model can be used in connection with workplace learning theory. Workplace learning occurs in the context of practice (the university) in concert with factors embedded in the culture. The CDO is bound by the context of practice where they encounter a variety of factors that benefit their professional learning; understanding workplaces as spaces for intentional activity with a focused and structured environment (Billett, 2002). University settings are structured by the governance models and historical foundation that provide the backdrop for CDOs are learning. The structural model of large universities somehow forces the CDO to be cautious, but continuously study the context.

Implications for Practice

The lack of intentional opportunities for CDOs to learn should be addressed. An institute for new and seasoned CDOs would provide a more structured community of learners. The community of learners would form to think through challenges and ideas that may be common in higher education. Additionally, an institute provides a safe space for participants who are guided by seasoned CDOs. A structured environment would offer specialized learning opportunities useful to a diversity executives at universities.

Diversity executives prefer to be treated as other executives and provided similar opportunities for growth. According to the data, CDOs seem to stay in the role from 5-6 years. It takes at least 2 years to adequately learn the role as mentioned in the findings chapter. The attrition rate must be addressed to have continuity and sustainability in the position.

University leaders need to provide additional resources for staffing and funding diversity offices. It was evident that additional staffing would provide time for the CDO to focus on higher-level executive work. Adding staff would also create opportunities for expanding the diversity office to reach other areas like education, policy, or engagement. Funding for professional development would provide intentionality for professional development. Research about higher education institutions without CDOs warrants investigation. In what way do college and university presidents' manage institutional diversity and what is its value on campus.

Implications for Future Research

Additional research about CDOs at other types of universities is one recommendation for future research. Large research universities present a larger more complex context that differs from small or medium colleges or universities. Recognizing the similarities and contrasts of CDOs at different types of colleges and universities could provide the data in support or contrast

to this study. Using a similar or other qualitative approach would relay the lived experience of CDOs learning in the context of practice. Another approach could be framed using career development or motivation for learning.

A second recommendation for future research is to examine how college presidents and/or provosts respond to institutional diversity without a CDO. Uncovering what strategies colleges and universities use to rally the campus community around diversity issues. A study of institutions without CDOs could be compared to understand how institutional diversity is perceived and managed without a diversity executive. Approaching this recommendation with a quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods design would yield comparable results to show if inclusive excellence is monitored.

Third, the participants discussed having to prove their worth as the CDO. Research by Williams and Wade-Golden (2007) share a model for preparing the campus for the arrival of the CDO. All campus leaders should review this document in an effort to prepare the campus for the diversity executive. Research campus readiness and preparation for the CDO could provide further knowledge about how well this task is completed. Are campus leaders preparing the campus community and is this an intentional process that engages multiple layers of participants (e.g. senior leaders, mid-managers, and skilled laborers).

Fourth, further research could examine the process of how CDOs become involved with assessment. This study did not examine assessment, yet I expected some conversation about assessing the environment or the campus about diversity and inclusion efforts. Further research could understand how knowledgeable CDOs are in regards to assessment. A study about CDOs assessment practices could inform potential opportunities to share what they learn or to provide

learning to actually conduct assessment. In an age of accountability and shrinking budgets CDOs will have to provide evidence of the impact of having a diversity office.

Limitations

When I initially planned this research study my goal was to interview CDOs at universities in the southeast. The identity of the participants would have been at risk given the small number of CDOs nationally and in a specific region. Limiting the study to the southeast also presented concerns about revealing the identity of the participants or their institution. My background with diversity and multicultural work was a second limitation. I was the research instrument and did my best to eliminate biases; however, my background has conditioned my lens and how I perceive diversity. A third challenge is my extensive career in higher education, especially in student affairs. My professional lens is definitely an influence because I understand the work of student affairs practitioners in their work with college students. To compensate for bias I reviewed my interpretation of the data to limit any influences based on my experiences.

The generalizability of this study is another limitation. Qualitative research offers a perspective to understand the factors involved in the experience of the participants. The data are not presented to be a definitive outcome for all circumstances; instead, the data provide thoughtful findings for others to consider. Replicating this study may find similar results, but contextual circumstances will likely yield different findings. This study still has relevance in discussions about marginalized professionals, executives of color, and women executives.

Summary

This chapter is about the conclusions derived based on the research and the findings. The three findings for this study are that CDOs: (a) validate their executive position within the university, (b) deliberately construct their strategies for learning, and (c) learns how to navigate

the intricacies of their environments. Other campus executives have the luxury of precedent and a community that understands their functional role at the university. A CDO does not have the same understanding and often must prove their worth.

Theoretical conclusions confirmed the Trio Model as a valid approach for framing professional learning. The three elements of the model are theoretically supported by informal and incidental learning, experiential learning, and workplace learning. All three theories are discussed in this chapter to reinforce the idea that: (a) there is not a model to explain how diversity practice, and (b) the Trio model proves useful in explaining professional learning. The findings suggested that CDOs operate from self-derived theories, but there is no common theory for the profession.

Concluding Remarks

This study confirms how someone's background and experiences frame how they perceive aspects of their environment. I was shaped early to appreciate people as who they are, despite their income, neighborhood, or race. My parents and community reared me to appreciate human beings and the worth they bring to the world. Over time I adopted my perception for diversity to be a concept where everyone matters. This nation is at a critical moment where the president of the United States is ridiculed for his race. Young Black men are being murdered because of race. Women are being restricted of their rights because of political games. Latinos and other migrants are called aliens because they are different. When will we be a nation that values the diversity of everyone; leveraging diversity for good purposes?

Professionals who become CDOs do so because of their genuine care for the work. It would be difficult for someone to understand the pride that CDOs have for making a university a different space by limiting concerns of bigotry or hate. There are still unfortunate incidents on

university campuses used to insult certain populations, which still continue to force presidents to react. Moreover, campuses are ill-prepared to bring a CDO to campus using a reactionary approach because of the implementation process. The work of CDOs has to be recognized as a valuable asset by the senior leaders on campus. University presidents need to work closely with the CDO to achieve effective result and to move beyond the “window dressing” approach for institutional diversity.

Learning is a gift to improve our abilities and skills as contributors to our world. Developing additional skills to enhance one’s practice only furthers how impactful they are to themselves as a professional and the organization they serve. Learning should be about the improvement of the professional – in this case the CDO. The narratives of the CDOs enforce the idea that learning as a profession leads to an effective practitioner given the contextual factors that are considered.

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APPENDIX A

ELECTRONIC MAIL INVITATION TO CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICERS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

Greetings {NAME}:

My name is Robert Bryant and I am a PHD student at the University of Georgia in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration & Policy. This e-mail is an invitation to be a participant for my study, "The professional learning of Chief Diversity Officers in higher education."

As a participant you would be expected to: (a) participate in one interview that will last up to 1.5 hours, (b) share in-depth detailed stories about your professional learning and the day-to-day challenges associated with your role as the institution's senior diversity officer, and (c) review a small amount of data to ensure its accuracy (a method referred to as member check). My goal is to report findings with accurate details of what you have reported; hence your participation in the review of a set of data.

I am sure that your experience as a chief diversity officer will provide substantial information for my dissertation research. Your participation will provide a resource to CDOs and add to the literature about professional learning. If you would like to participate in this study please reply to me via email or a phone call to schedule time for an interview. Your participation will remain confidential, and I will provide a consent form to protect your identity, as required by the University of Georgia. Additionally, my study is being advised/supervised by Dr. Talmadge Guy, Associate Professor in the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy (tguy@uga.edu).

My contact information is:

Robert Bryant, rgbryant@uga.edu, rgbryant3@gmail.com

678-923-7945 (Cell phone)

PHD student – Adult Education program (Dept. of Lifelong Education, Administration & Policy)

My major professor can be contacted:

Dr. Talmadge Guy, tguy@uga.edu

Associate Professor, Dept. of Lifelong Education, Administration & Policy

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert Bryant

PHD Student, Adult Education

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What do CDOs identify as their learning needs?
 - a. Tell me about your path to the role you have now at this institution.
 - b. What do you perceive to be competencies for CDOs?
 - c. Tell me about the learning needs you have identified while being a CDO.
2. What strategies do CDOs utilize for learning?
 - a. Tell me about the activities or events you engage with to learn as a senior diversity officer/executive.
 - b. Tell me about the strategies that have benefited you most during your professional learning process.
 - c. What are significant resources you use for your professional learning?
 - d. Tell me about what you would have wanted to learn prior to becoming a CDO.
3. How do institutional factors inhibit or support CDOs' learning?
 - a. Tell me about your job related successes and challenges that influence your learning as a CDO?
 - b. Tell me about the institutional resources that are available to support your learning plan and goals.
 - c. Describe the institutional factors that support your learning as the CDO.
 - d. Describe the institutional factors that challenge or impede your learning as the CDO.

- e. Tell me about expectations that are presented to you from university constituents that influence your learning goals.
4. What is the impact of professional learning for CDOs working in higher education?
- a. Tell me about the significant learning moments in your career that has helped you in your current role.
 - b. Tell me about how prior professional experiences contributed to your professional learning in your current role as the CDO?
 - c. Tell me about the outcomes of your professional learning.
 - d. Share examples of how learning in your current role has increased your effectiveness as a CDO.
 - e. Share examples of when learning was unsuccessful.
5. Please share information that you believe would benefit this study or any information you want to share that was not asked during this interview.

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM CHIEF DIVERSITY OFFICERS & PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

I, _____, agree to participate in a research study titled "The Professional Learning for Chief Diversity Officers in Higher Education" conducted by Robert G. Bryant from the Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy at the University of Georgia (rgbryant@uga.edu) under the direction of Dr. Talmadge Guy, Department of Lifelong Education, Administration and Policy, University of Georgia (706-542-4015; tguy@uga.edu). I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I can ask to have all of the information about me returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

The reason for this study is to understand the role of learning as Chief Diversity Officers lead in higher education contexts. If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

- 1) Answer questions about my role as a chief diversity officer during one audio taped interview – in person (interview lasting up to 1.5 hours)
- 2) Review the data as themes are being developed to ensure accuracy by reading information provided from the researcher (member check)

The benefits to me are my contribution to practitioners working in diversity leadership roles and a contribution to scholarly conversations about diversity and the CDO role in higher education.

The only risk that may arise is political backlash from members of my home institution regarding my responses. To protect all participants the researcher will use pseudonyms when identifying individual participants and specific institutions. No identifying information will be able to link participants to the study. All data will be retained and stored by the researcher for up to one year; however, all audio taped interview data will be erased at the conclusion of the study – no later than December 31, 2015. The only people who will have access to the data other than me are my major/advising professor, and my methodologist.

No individually identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others without my written permission, except if it is required by law. I will be assigned an identifying number and this number will be used to refer to my specific institution and interview data. The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project.

I understand that I am agreeing by my signature on this form to take part in this research project and understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form for my records.

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Additional questions or problems regarding my rights as a research participant should be addressed to The Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, 612 Boyd Graduate Studies Research Center, Athens, Georgia 30602-7411; Telephone (706) 542-3199; E-Mail Address IRB@uga.edu

APPENDIX D

PILOT INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Why did you become a chief diversity officer?
2. Please describe your responsibilities as the chief diversity officer.
3. What are the necessary characteristics one would need to be a CDOs?
4. What does it mean to be an institutional leader?
5. What were your thoughts about being a CDO prior to taking on the leadership role?
6. Please discuss your leadership style in your role as a CDO.
7. What influenced you to utilize your current leadership style?
8. How effective is your leadership style?
9. Since you have served as a CDO, what have been some major challenges?
10. What are the challenges you face as you lead campus diversity?
11. Please talk about your *most* challenging experience as the CDO.
12. Please talk about your *most* rewarding experience as a CDO.
13. What have you learned from the leadership challenges?
14. Please discuss the most educational moment you experienced as a CDO.
15. How has your learning influenced your leadership style?
16. What resources do you use to enhance your leadership skills?
17. What “words of wisdom” would you share with an aspiring CDO?

18. Please share additional comments and/or information you feel will be helpful.