"Feels Like Racial Battle Fatigue": Managing Diversity Crisis Moments in Higher Education

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“FEELS LIKE RACIAL BATTLE FATIGUE”:
MANAGING DIVERSITY CRISIS MOMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
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in

The School of Education

by
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The Bible says, “He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear.” You have been tempered for the test! Like tempered steel or glass, certain additives have been placed within you to increase your ability to stand up to the pressures life will throw at you. The fact that you have been exposed to this level of testing is a sign that God has given you the grace to handle it. He’s not going to let you escape this trial because He’s equipped you to deal with it.

-Daily Devotional, The Word for You Today

Lord, I thank you for bringing me to this point of my journey. I stand in awe of your grace, mercy, and favor. I am so undeserving of your goodness but you continue to bless me. When I prayed, you heard me and you answered. When I did not know where to go next, you directed me. I stand preparation for what you have in store for my life so that you may get the glory and I may receive good. Amen.

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ABSTRACT

Higher education was founded over three hundred years ago for a specific group, affluent, White men in mind. In the past five decades, however, the demographics of Higher Education Institutions have changed drastically from those early homogenous origins. The increased access of underrepresented populations attending Predominately White Institutions necessitated the need for offices that serve these groups. Offices of Multicultural Affairs or Multicultural Centers were created to address issues of diversity but they did not fully address issues of equity on college campuses.

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand the ways in which mid-level diversity management professionals who oversee Offices of Multicultural Affairs or Multicultural Centers navigate their roles. In addition, the research study sought to examine how they navigated a diversity crisis moment, which is defined as a moment where diversity was the mitigating factor for a campus incident or crisis. Data revealed the career pathways of these professionals were non-linear with none having formal training. Thus, role navigation was complicated by their career pathway. Moreover, the findings suggest diversity crisis moments did not occur as discrete incidents, but were part of a larger systemic crisis impacting how mid-level diversity management professionals conceptualized their roles and how they engaged issues of difference on their campuses. Strategic Diversity Leadership and Critical Race Theory served as theoretical frameworks. Specifically, the Critical Race Theory tenets of counterstory, racial realism, Whiteness as property, interest convergence, expansive view of equality vs. restrictive view of equality, and social change were considered for this study.

This dissertation locates itself in the emerging fields of diversity management and diversity crisis management. Data from interviews with mid-level diversity management
professionals, tours of office spaces and other campus spaces relative to diversity, relevant websites, and campuses diversity plans served as the basis for developing the findings.

Understanding how mid-level diversity management professionals view diversity on their campus, their role in challenging situations, and their understanding of diversity crisis moments has specific implications for colleges and universities. This study assists university administrators in better defining and understanding their roles, particularly chief diversity officers in hiring qualified professionals, and operationalizing the roles of mid-level diversity management professionals who engage in diversity work.
The members of the Black Student Union at the University of Acme asked Cindy if they could have a watch party in the Union on the night of the 2012 U.S. presidential election.

While she approves the request, Cindy has her concerns. She tells the students, “You all have got to be low key. You cannot be there once the presidential winner is announced. You have to be at home. If you want to watch until 10 o’clock fine, but go home.”

It is election night at the University of Acme.

A group of students decide to express their feelings about the President’s election. Ten or so students walk from a residence hall to the front of the Union. Students start tweeting and a social media frenzy occurs. Ten students turn into over a hundred, maybe a few hundred people. There are two different groups present, one happy and one unhappy about the election results. Words are exchanged with students getting into verbal arguments. A couple of students have some physical contact. A sign is burned and some things are thrown. While tensions are high at the Union, most of the discord between the two groups occurs on social media (presumably via twitter).

Meanwhile Cindy is not on campus. She is attending to a personal family matter.

At about 3:00 am or 4:00 am, Cindy receives a text message on her cell phone, which she sleeps through. It is 6:00 am when Cindy wakes up and sees the text message from a friend that says, “Tell me this is not true the University I graduated from is having a riot because a Black president is elected.”

Cindy turns on CNN and there was the University of Acme. The announcement was “Riot occurs on the University of Acme campus.”
Cindy immediately calls her spouse who also works at the University of Acme. She says, “What is going on?”

Cindy’s husband responds saying he didn’t know, but he was headed to campus to find out.

Cindy then called the Dean of Students. He confirms a situation happened late the night before in response to the election results.

University administration forms a special committee to investigate the occurrence and to identify what needs to be done while being sensitive and respectful of all. This committee met for a semester and a half, and culminated with several recommendations for the Chancellor. One of the recommendations was for The University of Acme to be proactive in responding and preparing to respond to any incidents that can happen.

Increasingly, colleges and universities are being faced with tense, racially challenging moments like the previous narrative. Such events have disrupted “normal” operations and challenged existing institutional climates. A wave of school shootings, sexual impropriety scandals, and suicides as a result of bullying has gripped media headlines. They have also the safety and security of college campuses and how university administrators’ respond. These moments have left administrators grappling with questions such as: “How could have these events been prevented?,“ “How can future occurrences be prevented?,“ and “How does the university shift institutional climate from pain and despair to normal operations that are more caring and empathetic after these tragic events have occurred?” Crisis moments are complex and challenging tests to institutional resources, human capital, and institutional frameworks.

University administrators will continue to face crisis moments. It is necessary, therefore, to have a comprehensive understanding of how to manage, access, and successfully navigate these
moments. Professionals want to prevent or minimize polarization so that the progress of institutional diversity efforts and inclusive campus climates are not hampered.

**Crisis Moments in Higher Education**

The increase in access to higher education has created more diverse universities (Thelin, 2004; Bowen & Bok, 1998). No longer are universities only educating a select demographic of white, affluent men or those training for ministry (Thelin, 2004; Fleming, 1984). As access to colleges and universities increases, institutions are becoming more reflective of the United States’ changing demographics, providing opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds (i.e., race gender, socioeconomic status, ability, and sexual orientation) to enroll (United States Department of Education, 2011). With increased access to higher education, more students are choosing to attend college to advance their professional careers and wealth attainment. College campuses are, subsequently, becoming more like small cities in scope, population and services (Levine & Cureton, 1998). There are currently over 20 million students enrolled in either four-year public or private institutions (United States Department of Education, 2011). With increased enrollment numbers, college administrators have been compelled to create and assess greater measures to ensure campus services are meeting student needs. It is unclear if the assessment of campus services is due to a) a genuine interest to diversify campuses; b) a result of student demands for services that are reflective of their educational and cultural experiences; c) an integration of best practices from other institutions; or d) an understanding of providing what the students want to yield happy consumers and alumni. One area that has become integral for college administrators to meet student needs is to ensure a safe campus environment.

Although ensuring campus safety has been a goal of college administrators since the early 1600s (Rentz, 2004; Thelin, 2004), some of the most recent forms of threats to campus
safety have caused the most concern. Incidents at Virginia Tech, the University of California San Diego, Rutgers University, and the University of Missouri are just a few examples of campus crisis moments which that caused a reexamination of protocols and measures to ensure campus safety (Smith, 2007; Bergen, 2010; Gendar, Sandoval, & McShane, 2010; Chau, 2012). Some threats to college campuses have escalated in scope from mere incidents to full blown crises, as in the case of the consecutive diversity crisis moments at the University of California San Diego. The specific series of crisis moments resulted in a settlement of racist harassment allegations with the United States Department of Justice and the United States Department of Education (Chau, 2012; United States Department of Justice, 2012).

Given the complexities mentioned thus far, it is important to understand how these considerations interact with the idea of a crisis moment. Zdziarski (2006) defined a crisis as “an event, which is often sudden or unexpected, that disrupts the normal operations of the institution or its educational mission and threatens the well-being of personnel, property, financial resources, and/or reputation of the institution” (p. 5). This definition shall serve as the operating definition for a crisis in the proposed study.

Diversity Crisis Moments in Higher Education

Diversity crisis moments have shaped the landscape of the United States for decades. The most pressing social movements of our time included the Civil Rights Movement, the Women’s Liberation Movement, and the Gay Rights Movement. These social movements have been diversity crisis moments shaping how we view, interact, and enact laws to include or exclude groups of people on educational, social, and economic margins due to systemic institutional practices. In smaller contexts, but of no less importance or impact, diversity crisis moments on college campuses have forced a reexamination of practices and principles that have left groups
feeling marginalized, disenfranchised, and unheard. Birnbaum (1988) suggested universities can become tightly coupled systems resistant to change. Some resistance occurs when change, which may include diversity efforts, may not happen as quickly as needed to begin a shift in campus racial climate. A lack of change or slowly forming change may create resistance on the part of the university, as there may be members of the university community who want immediate and effective change or members of the university community who are content with the current status quo. Oftentimes, the result of these competing power dynamics is a crisis moment – a moment where the confrontation of operational climate and culture collide with the active resistance of the marginalized group.

**Statement of the Problem**

Universities were created to educate a specific population of elite, White men (Thelin, 2004; Solomon, 1985; Thelin, 2003). Thus, these early institutions were absent of diverse populations, excluding students of color, women, and those of lower socio-economic status (Thelin, 2004; Solomon, 1985; Fleming, 1984; Anderson, 1998). As society placed more value on the attainment of a college education, more groups traditionally denied access to college sought access (Anderson, 1988). As a result, increased access to colleges, U.S. institutions have more diverse student bodies (National Center of Education Statistics, 2011). This increased diversity has challenged existing programs and services that were not inclusive of diverse student populations. As a result of the challenges, universities began providing programs, student services, and academic disciplines to meet student needs, and work to create a more welcoming campus environment (Rooks, 2006; Hurtado, 1992).

Although many colleges have inclusive programs and services, most colleges have remained exclusive institutions that have yet to fully embrace diversity and adopt inclusive
practices diverse faculty and staff hiring, enrolling and retaining students of color, and creating a welcoming classroom, and campus climate (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). The intersection of increased diversity on college campuses coupled with systemic practices of institutions that were not designed with diverse populations can cause conflict. In these instances conflict can manifest itself in different ways including microaggressions, stereotyping, resistance, unwelcoming racial climate, isolation of diverse populations, and lack of culturally responsive programs and services. It is within these spaces of negotiating institutional practices and resistance that diversity crisis moments and challenges to perceived injustices predicated around diversity issues, can occur.

There has been research and an examination of student protests on college campuses (Boren, 2001). Little research has specifically focused on the response of the university to the mitigating incident, protest response, or actions taken to move the university forward following incidents of crisis where diversity is the central issue. This study addresses responses to diversity crisis moments at universities in the south.

**Research Questions**

This study explored five research questions related to diversity crisis management in higher education. Specifically, how do administrators conceptualize a diversity crisis moment on their campus? Are university administrators prepared to address a diversity crisis? What factors do university administrators consider when addressing these types of crisis? What lessons, if any, are learned from moments of crisis? And finally, how do university administrators move the campus community beyond a crisis?
Significance of the Study

The study of diversity crisis moments from the perspective of universities and their administrators will enhance the knowledge of administrators seeking more insight into managing diversity crises. This study adds to the evolving crisis management literature as most crisis management literature and plans center on natural disasters and school shootings (Wang & Hutchins; 2010; Whitely, Felice, & Bailey, 2007; Paterson et al., 2007; Farazmand, 2007). The study provides the ability to consider intersections between diversity and crisis management in ways that have been previously unexplored. This study also adds to the growing literature about diversity and diversity management in higher education (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the theoretical framework of this study. CRT is rooted in legal scholarship (Crenshaw, 1995; Bell, 1995; Delgado, 1989; Matsuda; 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), positing race and power are disproportionately used in our American judicial system in ways that perpetuate institutional oppression of traditionally marginalized groups. The emergence of CRT as a theoretical framework in education occurred when Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) theorized CRT’s utility as a means of examining the convergence of racism, power, and social context within educational systems. Since that time, CRT has evolved into a methodological approach to study complex phenomena involving race, racism, and power in and across disciplines in education (Parker & Lynn, 2002).

There seven tenets of CRT: 1) interest-convergence (Bell, 1992), 2) whiteness as property (Harris, 1995), 3) counterstory (Delgado, 1989), 4) critique of liberalism (Gotanda, 1991), 5) restrictive view of equality vs. expansive view of equality (Tate, 1994; Tate & Rousseau, 2002;
Dixson & Rousseau, 2005) 6) racial realism (Bell, 1992) and 7) social change (Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Love, 2004). Each tenet provides a deeper examination of the role of CRT in education. For the purpose of this dissertation, five tenets – counterstory, racial realism, social change, restrictive vs. expansive view, interest convergence, whiteness as property, and social change – are used for the theoretical framework.

The CRT tenet Counterstory telling seeks to give voice to marginalized groups whose stories often go untold (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). In the United States, counterstories chronicle the experiences of people of color against the pervasive dominant narratives constructed by Whites. These stories run counter to the dominant narratives that are told, or taken for granted, by the dominant group about life experiences including the life experiences of people of color. The narratives of the dominant group are used to frame the message of dominant and non-dominant groups into the message of a single story (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Counterstories depict the ways in which people of color experience social, political, and institutional systems often differ from dominant group counterparts. It should be noted, however, that counterstories are not limited to the response to stories told by the dominant group (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

In an educational context, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) contended authentic voices of people of color heard through stories are needed to gain useful information about their experiences in these settings. Ladson-Billings (2005) cautioned the use of counterstories as a standalone tenet of CRT since stories themselves are likely to be misunderstood or misinterpreted without being properly unpacked (Fasching-Varner, 2009), and may unconsciously move scholars not embedded within CRT away from the foundational scholarship (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Racial realism (Bell, 1995; Parks & Jones, 2008) provides an alternative approach to the quest for equality among marginalized groups. The Civil Rights Movement and other
movements for equal rights have historically demanded judicial decisions, programs, services, and treatment equal to what Whites received. Advocates of racial realism (Bell, 1995; Parks, 2007; Parks & Jones, 2008), however, call for an understanding that the power dynamic between Whites and other marginalized groups will never result in equality for both groups, as the dominant group will never voluntarily relinquish its superior status. Instead, racial realists call for an understanding of the marginalized groups’ subordinate status as a mechanism to challenge oppressive practices and treatment (Bell, 1992; Bell, 1995).

The alternative approach of working from a subordinate status to institute change is not new. Critics of this approach believe that the acceptance of subordinate status is a detriment to the gains made during the Civil Rights Movement where great progress was made instituting laws to provide equal rights and equal opportunity for marginalized groups. Bell (1995) asserted, however, that in many instances the traditional notion of working in a system that hinges on “abstract principles [that] lead to legal results that harm blacks and perpetuate their inferior status” (p. 308). The acceptance of racial realism as a construct seeks to situate the presence of systemic racism and power dynamics as pervasive and will never be totally eradicated. It is an understanding of racism and power dynamics from this vantage point that provides an opportunity for resistance and social change.

Delgado (1989) argued two groups, the in-group and the out-group, exist in American society. It is the in-group, or dominant group, that creates narratives seeking to normalize their superior position in relation to the out-group, or marginalized group (Delgado, 1989). Conversely, out-groups find themselves on the racial, political, and social margins whose voices have been mitigated by the dominant narrative and whose experiences have been devalued or viewed as less than the experiences of the dominant group (Delgado, 1989; Crenshaw, 1995;
hooks, 2000). Counter-storytelling provides a space and a voice to members of out-groups, and serves as a mechanism to resist the dominant narrative by creating a narrative that challenges dominant group think (Delgado, 1989). Delgado (1989) reminded us of the power of the use of counterstories by out-groups which “can open new windows into reality, showing us that there are possibilities for life other than the ones we live” (p. 2414).

The expansive vs. restrictive tenet focuses on how equality is viewed in anti-discrimination law. Crenshaw (1995) suggested an expansive view of equality recognizes past injustices and seeks to prevent future injustices from occurring, while a restrictive view of equality only looks to prevent future injustices and does not take into account past instances of anti-discrimination. An expansive view recognizes that past injustices are systemic and pervasive. A restrictive view positions past injustices as discrete moments. Although conceptualized in anti-discrimination law, the expansive view vs. the restrictive view can be applied to understand the existence of inequities in educational settings (Tate & Rousseau, 2002; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005).

Interest convergence occurs when racial equality is achieved to benefit the interests of Whites (Bell, 1995). Interest convergence underscores racial equality as the byproduct of the interests of Whites being maintained. The positioning of racial equality in relation to White interests continues to situate people of color as the non-dominant group while Whites are situated as the dominant group. Interest convergence will not occur in instances where racial equality does not benefit the dominant group since racial equality is tied to the desires of the dominant group. In educational settings, interest convergence is achieved when schools and universities believe that inclusive policies and practices will best serve the interests of the established system.
In addition to CRT, this study is informed by Strategic Diversity Leadership. Williams (2013) suggested five key principles to serve as a leadership paradigm “to make diversity a matter of excellence” (p. 14). The principles of Strategic Diversity Leadership provide diversity management professionals with tangible suggestions to inform their leadership diversity practices. Strategic Diversity Leadership focuses on shifting the context of diversity management from a reactionary approach as a way to respond to discrimination and exclusion to a proactive approach that positions diversity as a core institutional value. Through the Strategic Diversity Leadership principles, a proactive approach can assist administrators in advancing a diversity agenda not only to benefit underrepresented populations, but also to benefit the entire campus community.

Chapter 1 of this dissertation provides an introduction to contemporary crisis moments in higher education. The chapter also provides a snapshot of diversity crisis moments in higher education. Also, Critical Race Theory is introduced as the theoretical framework for this study. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on Critical Race Theory, portraiture, a brief history of American Higher Education, a review of crisis moments in Higher Education, and a review of diversity crisis moments in Higher Education. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology for the research study.

The counterstory in Chapter 4 uses CRT to highlight major elements in the findings. Chapters 5 and 6 represent the findings from the research study. Chapter 7 concludes the counterstory and provides recommendations, limitations and conclusion.
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Critical areas that shaped this study surfaced in a review of the literature. The major areas of research were Critical Race Theory, higher education, diversity in higher education, crisis moments in higher education, portraiture, strategic diversity leadership, and diversity crisis moments in higher education. An examination of the major and influential scholarship in each of these areas provided depth, scope, and the limitations of the research on diversity crisis management in higher education. The areas identified as critical in shaping this study are not the only areas that shape the examination of diversity crisis moments in higher education, however, these areas are critical in conceptualizing how diversity crisis moments impact college campuses and the university administrators who are in charge of managing these campuses.

The literature of Critical Race is explored first. Next, the history of higher education is explored followed by the history of diversity in higher education. An overview of the evolution of crisis management in higher education is provided and the roots of diversity crisis moments in higher education are discussed. The use of portraiture is explored and, finally, a summary of the literature is provided.

Critical Race Theory

Counterstories

Counterstories, a tenet of Critical Race Theory, seek to give voice to people from underrepresented populations through the use of storytelling (Solórzano and Yosso, 2002). The use of counterstories provides a compelling account into the lived experiences of people of color and other marginalized groups (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Griffin, Pifer, Humphrey & Hazlewood, 2011; Delgado, 1989; Matsuda, 1995; Delgado & Stephanic, 2001). These stories respond to dominant narratives, or master narratives, “that have often been generally accepted as
universal truth about particular groups” (Harper, 2009, p. 701). Ikemoto (1997) challenged the notion of creating counterstories in response to dominant groups’ ideology and instead advocated for the use of counterstories to reframe the standard story as the dominant discourse.

Counterstories have been a powerful aspect of CRT research, helping to give voice to people who find themselves on the margins of the dominant ideology (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Matsuda, 1995; Delgado & Stephanie, 2001; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) asserted that counterstories are critical in situating issues of race and racism in a larger social context. Despite the importance of counterstories in CRT scholarship, some debate exists among scholars as to the role of counterstories; Fine and Weis (1996), Ulichny (1997) and Ladson-Billings (2005) contended that such stories by themselves cannot be used to transform complex systems, suggesting that counterstories must be coupled with other tenets of CRT in forming analysis.

In educational contexts, counterstories have been used to chronicle the lived experiences of underrepresented populations in predominately White educational institutions (Ladson-Billings, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Fasching-Varner & Dodo-Seriki, 2012). Decuir and Dixson (2004) used counterstories to discuss the perils of African American high school students enrolled at a predominately White, elite, independent school in the southeastern United States. The counterstories or counter-narratives of the African American students “allowed them to contradict the Othering process, and, thus, challenge the privileged discourses that are often found in elite, predominately White independent schools” (p. 27). In this study, the use of counterstories helped to dispel racial stereotypes as well as give voice to students who otherwise felt silenced (Decuir & Dixson, 2004).
Research studies have also used the counterstories of college undergraduate students to highlight the experiences of attending predominately White institutions (Delgado Bernal, 2002; Smith, Allen, & Delaney, 2007). Delgado Bernal (2002) suggested that by valuing the dominant perspective, the ways of knowing and experiences of underrepresented students have been ignored. “Although students of color are holders and creators of knowledge, they often feel as if their histories, experiences, cultures, and languages are devalued, misinterpreted, or omitted within formal educational settings” (p. 106). In their study of African American male college students, Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) found that “by telling their own life experiences, … racial encounters produce[d] painful psychological responses” (p. 573). For many other students of color their experiences include discrimination and isolation (D’Augelli & Hershberger, 1993; Fleming, 1984). Hurtado (1992) asserted that the social context of “overt racial conflict can no longer be viewed as aberrations or isolated incidents, but rather are indicators of a more general problem of unresolved racial issues in college environments and society at large” (p. 540).

In a study of Black male undergraduate students, Harper (2009) defended the use of composite counterstories, suggesting the use of counterstories “…entails relying on data collected from multiple persons of color who have experienced a particular context or similar phenomena” (p. 702). Both Harper (2009) and Brown and Donnor (2011) found that the counterstories of the participants provided rich and salient data that was contrary to the racial stereotypes and classifications as athletes, underprepared, ‘at-risk’, and low-income that they encountered as part of their college experience. Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) also used counterstories to examine the experiences of African American college students. In their work counterstories were used to examine the racial microaggressions and campus racial climate
discussed by the participants. Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) asserted that the use of CRT in education is different from the use of CRT in other disciplines because it attempts to situate race and racism in the research to challenge the traditional conceptualizations of “race, gender, and class by showing how these social constructs intersect to impact communities of color” within educational spaces (p. 63).

Research studies have also highlighted that counterstories are powerful for many underrepresented groups such as Asian (Chang, 1999), LGBTQQA (Misawa, 2010), indigenous (Brayboy, Fann, Castagno, & Solyom, 2012; Brayboy & Castagno, 2012) and Latina/o (Valdes, 1997, 1998; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, 2001). LatCrit is the most developed offshoot field of CRT to engage with counterstories (Valdes, 1997, 1998; Solórzano & Solórzano, 1995; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2000, 2001). Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solórzano (2009) found that Latina/o students experienced interpersonal microaggressions, racial jokes, and institutional microaggressions as parts of their college experience which “cast doubt on students’ academic merits and capabilities, demean their ethnic identity, and dismiss their cultural knowledge” (p. 667). Yosso, Smith, Ceja and Solórzano (2009) asserted that counterstories coupled with other CRT tenets, “explicitly focus on how the social construct of race shapes university structures, practices, and discourses from the perspectives of those injured by and fighting against institutional racism” (p. 663). The use of counterstories provides an opportunity to further understand the experiences of Latina/o students.

Counterstories have also been used to examine the experiences of graduate students of color in higher education. In a study of doctoral students, Gildersleeve, Croom, and Vasquez (2011) used CRT as the theoretical framework to understand how Black and Latina/o doctoral
students experience doctoral education. Gildersleeve, Croom, and Vasquez (2011) suggested that through CRT, these narratives “examine discursive understandings of lived experience. As such, CRT values the voices and experiences of those who are least heard in education, especially as they provide counter-understandings to dominant ideologies” (p. 97). Similarly, Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, and Bowles (2009) used counterstories as a part of a larger study to investigate the social experiences of Black graduate students at a southern research university. The counterstories of the Black graduate students provided context as to why many of the respondents stated that they did not enjoy their graduate school experience. The counterstories revealed that Black graduate students often experienced isolation from the university and disconnectedness from their program; discrimination and loneliness were regular parts of their experience; graduate life was something to endure and survive, and their alma mater was not a place where they would send their children (Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2009).

The counterstories of faculty of color have also been studied (Burden, Harrison, & Hodge, 2005; Mthethwa-Sommers, 2012; Fujimoto, 2012). Burden, Harrison, and Hodge (2005) found the use of counterstories as an effective approach to examine the “organizational socialization of otherwise silent African American faculty colleagues in kinesiology programs” (p. 226); they also used counterstories “as contemporary efforts to reveal the discourses and psychic preservation of marginalized groups” (p. 227). In this context, the counterstories served as a way for African American faculty to share feelings of isolation and neglect as members of the faculty at Predominately White Institutions.

Counterstories have also been used to create counterspaces in educational contexts. Patton (2006) found that Black Cultural Centers on predominately White campuses served as a
space for Black students to be themselves. hooks (1990) challenged that homeplaces are spaces to resist the dominant narrative that frames their college experience. Patton (2006) suggested that Black Cultural Centers can be homeplaces for Black students as “the inception of BCCs and their establishment on campus emerged from Black students’ need to have a ‘counterspace’, or safe place to resist the harsh racial climate on campus and to tell their counterstories” (pg. 630).

**Racial Realism**

Racial realism acknowledges the systemic role of racism in our everyday lives (Bell, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefanic, 2001, Parks, 2007). While Bell (1995) contended that by accepting the existence of racism, underrepresented populations can better position themselves to advocate for equality through alternative approaches. Parks (2007) advocated for a systematic approach to critical race realism. Bell (1992) posited “racism is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component of this society” (p. ix). Delgado and Stefanic (2001) suggested that “racism is ordinary, not aberrational – ‘normal science’, the usual way society does business, the common, everyday experience of most people of color in this country” (p. 5). Debate continues about the presence of racism in the United States since the election of Barak Obama, the first African American President of the United States. Many would include the post-Obama era within the larger context of a post-racial era (Clark, Fasching-Varner, & Brimhall-Vargas, 2012). Although the conversation continues on the emergence of a post-racial climate, many scholars argue that the impact of racial racism still exists in higher education contexts (Hurtado, 1992; Steele, 1997; Clark, Fasching-Varner & Brimhall-Vargas, 2012). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argued that race is a significant factor in explaining inequity in education as class and gender alone “are not powerful enough to explain all of the differences (or variance) in school experience and performance” (p. 51). Marginalized groups
attending predominately White institutions have experienced the effects of racial realism through both institutional practices and microaggressions (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). Prolonged experiences of microaggressions can manifest into racial battle fatigue. Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) asserted that racial battle fatigue develops from “race-related stressors at the societal, institutional, interpersonal, and individual levels” (p. 553). These experiences continue to serve as illustrations that race and racism still exist in society and in our educational institutions.

One way racial realism manifests is through microaggressions (Solórzano, 1998). Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) suggested “that dominant groups often attempt to legitimate their position via ideological means or a set of beliefs that explains or justifies some actual or potential social arrangement” (p. 61). In their study of the experiences of African American college students, Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) found that students experienced racial microaggression in the classroom with faculty, outside of the classroom with peers, and in social settings. Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, and Bowles (2009) asserted that Black graduate students also experience microaggressions. Black graduate students experienced discrimination from their White professors, social isolation, a perception of inferior academic ability, discrimination from their White counterparts, and being forced to represent their race in classroom discussions (Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2009). These microaggressions left Black graduate students with negative memories of the graduate experience with some indicating that they would not want to send their children to the institution where they received their graduate degree (Johnson-Bailey, Valentine, Cervero, & Bowles, 2009). Burden, Harrison, and Hodge (2005) found that Black faculty in kinesiology programs at
Predominately White Institutions experienced some of the same feelings of isolation and the perception of inferior academic ability as Black graduate students.

Decuir and Dixson (2004) discussed racial realism in institutional and individual contexts and found that the Black high school students in their study thought that the severity of racial incidents was minimalized. One Black high school student discussed feeling threatened by his White counterparts after the internet profile of a White student was found to contain racist and threatening remarks. In an institutional context, the principal reduced the disciplinary sanction of expulsion to suspensions for a month because of a threat of potential legal action against the school.

**Expansive View vs. Restrictive View**

The expansive view of equality vs. restrictive view of equality is derived from anti-discrimination law. Crenshaw (1995) suggested that an expansive view of equality seeks to address past discrimination and prevent future discrimination practices whereas a restrictive view of equality seeks to only address future instances of discrimination and does not seek to rectify past injustices. In a restrictive view instances of discrimination are viewed as singular moments. An expansive view of equality sees instances of discrimination as examples of discrimination over time. As a tenet of CRT, an expansive view of equality vs. a restrictive view of equality juxtaposes the process of advancing diversity versus the outcomes of advancing diversity in an institutional framework. Clark (2012) suggested that a restrictive view that focuses on the process of advancing diversity efforts is preferred over an expansive view of equality that focuses on the outcomes of advancing diversity on a college campus. A focus of a restrictive view is on short-term goals such as increased enrollment numbers of underrepresented students and campus climate, while an expansive view focuses on long-term impact such as retention and
Rousseau and Tate (2003) discussed the impact of restrictive vs. expansive views of equality among high school mathematics teachers. In their study, Rousseau and Tate (2003) found that teachers were concerned about making sure that students were treated equally in the classroom rather than being concerned about the equity in achievement of African American students versus their White peers. The restrictive view of the teachers suggested that if students were treated equally, then any disparities were based on the aptitude of the students and not the teaching methods as all students were taught the same irrespective of their individual needs (Rousseau & Tate, 2003; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). The expansive view would recognize the belief that treating students equally would not be enough to close the achievement gap (Rousseau & Tate, 2003; Dixson & Rousseau, 2006). Different teaching methods were necessary to increase African American student achievement in math. The teachers’ perceptions about equity limited their ability to think from an expansive view that would challenge them to think critically about the effect that treating all students the same had on closing the achievement gap between African American and White students.

**Interest Convergence**

The CRT tenet interest convergence suggests that the lived experiences of people of color or those from non-dominant groups will only be enhanced when the outcome benefits Whites (Bell, 1992; Delgado, 1989). Once the interests of Whites are achieved interest convergence will cease to be mutually beneficial and maintain the status quo for the dominant group. Interest convergence can manifest in areas including education, politics, and economics (Harper, 2009). In educational contexts, interest convergence can impact policies, admissions, and space. Bell
(1995) cited *Brown v. Board of Education* as an example of interest convergence in that the nation had a compelling interest to desegregate schools based on the desire to promote democracy and provide a more equitable society for African American soldiers returning home from World War II. This example provides a greater understanding of the benefit of interest convergence when applied to non-dominant groups.

Harper (2009) argued that interest convergence can be mutually beneficial for African American male student athletes and the community colleges which they attend. Harris (2009) suggested that increasing the transfer rate would provide substantial dividends for community colleges and African American male student athletes. The low transfer rates of African American male athletes provided a compelling rationale for community colleges to increase transfer rates to four-year institutions. While the common interest of having African American male student athletes play in their chosen sport and fulfill the goal of transferring to four-year institutions exists, Harris (2009) outlined four benefits for community colleges that increase transfer rates for African American male athletes. The four benefits are: 1) increased transfer rate for the college, 2) increased reputational gains for the community college, 3) gains by coaches who increase transfer rates, and 4) increased probability of African American male athletes going into professional sports and giving back as alumni. Harris (2009) argued that through increased transfer rates, the interests of African American male athletes to play sports at a larger institution, with the prospects of a future in a professional league, converges with the desire of community college administrators to increase their bottom line of increasing transfer rates and eventually developing prominent alumni. In this example of interest convergence, the interests of African American male athletes and community colleges coincide with one another.
Similarly, Castagno and Lee (2007) used interest convergence as a tool to examine policies about the use of native mascots and ethnic fraud at Midwestern University. The creation of policies condemning the use of native mascots as symbols by athletic teams signified the university’s responsiveness to the concerns of its indigenous community. The interest of the members of the indigenous community converged to reduce stereotypes and resulted in the university being perceived as being committed to diversity and valuing members of its communities. Castagno and Lee (2007) contended that the university, however, did not recognize the concerns of members of the indigenous community when faced with the prospect of creating a policy prohibiting ethnic fraud, the intentional effort to change one’s ethnicity for special consideration for financial aid, scholarships, or programs. In this example, university administration did not want to enact a policy that did not converge with their interest of maintaining the size of its indigenous population. Even though the ingenious community members wanted a policy in place, their interests did not serve the best interest of the university and as a result the policy was not created.

**Whiteness as Property**

Whiteness as property is a tenet of CRT that seeks to examine the role of an identity constructed around an increase in value based on skin color. In this regard, whiteness is deemed as something to be valued and any designation other than White is less valued. Harris (1995) suggested that the idea of Whiteness as a property value stemmed from slavery. “Whiteness defined the legal status of a person slave or free” (Harris, 1995, p.280). In addition to Whiteness designating one’s status as slave or free, whiteness was also tied to being deemed as having privilege over other groups. Harris (1995) noted that whiteness “conferred tangible and
economically valuable benefits, and it was jealously guarded as a valued possession, allowed only to those who met a strict standard of proof” (p.280).

Harris (1995) asserted that the property function of Whiteness functions in four key ways: 1) allows the rights of disposition; 2) provides for the right to use and enjoyment; 3) suggests whiteness has a reputation, and 4) allows for the absolute right to exclude. Harris (1995) noted that under these provisions, whiteness should not be viewed as property because it is non-transferrable, meaning if you were born non-White, there are no provisions that allow you to become White. As whiteness cannot be transferred it becomes much more valuable to possess. Therefore, its property value is enhanced. The right to use and enjoyment suggests that whiteness can be used as a resource to gain privileged status through which the benefits of having obtained privileged status can be enjoyed. Fasching-Varner (2009) suggested that “whiteness excludes in that Whites never have to define whiteness itself, but rather define what it is not” (p.818). The absolute right to exclude those deemed to be non-White increases the value of Whiteness as a property not afforded to every group.

Vaught and Castagno (2008) used whiteness as property to assess teacher attitudes to anti-bias training. Teachers in two school districts were interviewed to gage their reactions to voluntary trainings on race and racism. Vaught and Castagno (2008) found that in some instances White teachers were able to acknowledge the privileges of whiteness but did not translate whiteness from an individual to group framework where the basis of power originates. Similarly, teachers saw their whiteness as an individual condition that did not translate to the larger systemic issue of privilege in schools where an achievement gap existed between White students and students of color. While the trainings yielded an awareness of whiteness which teachers could articulate, teachers reframed issues around individual power instead of focusing
on the impact of Whiteness on institutional structures, whereby they could facilitate change in educating students of color and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Social Change

Social change can be considered to be a by-product within the CRT framework (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). The counterstories of marginalized groups and the recognition of racism as an inherent part of society can help facilitate changes that improve the experiences of people of color (Matsuda, 1995; Smith-Maddox & Solórzano, 2002; Yosso, 2005). Although Lorde (1984) contended that the “master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house” (p. 112), there can be sites of resistance that challenge the traditional notions of dominant ideology. While Bell (1995) argued for the understanding of racism as a permanent position to “free us to imagine and implement racial strategies that can bring fulfillment and triumph” (p. 306), Love (2004) argued for a more action-oriented approach in facilitating social change in educational contexts.

Social change in a higher education context can result in the shift of the racial climate on college campuses. The literature provides many instances where the quest for social change provides the opportunities for communities of color to create communities where racial stereotypes, feelings of isolation, and disengagement can be challenged. Gildersleeve, Croom, and Vasquez (2011) discussed the importance of peer-support networks for Black graduate students at Predominately White Institutions. The formation of these networks inside and outside of their academic spaces “allowed these students to affirm one another and to form a community in which they could openly share their experiences” (p. 105). Yosso, Smith, Ceja, and Solórzano (2009) found that Latina/o undergraduate students engaged in experiences “to culturally nourish and replenish themselves in response to marginalizing campus climates” (p. 676). Latina/o students sought out friends from the same background to create a sense of family while away
from home, participated in culturally relevant student organizations, and enrolled in cultural studies courses as a mechanism to socially change their educational experience.

Patton (2006) discussed Black Cultural Centers as places where social change can occur. Patton (2006) found that Black Cultural Centers served as a space where first-year African American students could find a welcoming space to aide in their transition to college. These students found academic resources and social support that assisted in navigating the larger campus environment. The Black Cultural Center also served as a space where students found community in an environment where there was a critical mass of other African American students. These community-building spaces allowed students to combat feelings of isolation and to find spaces where they could be themselves without fear of scrutiny or discrimination.

**Portraiture**

Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) described portraiture as a mechanism through which to capture the essence of a participant. Through the use of portraiture, participants are not conveyed as mirror reflections of how they see themselves; rather they are carefully selected representations of themselves (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005). At the base of portraiture is the researcher or portraitist who serves as central in the shaping of the research subjects. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) suggested:

The researcher is seen not only in defining the focus and field of inquiry but also in navigating the relationships with her or his subjects, in witnessing and interpreting the action, in tracing the emerging themes, and in creating the narrative. At each one of these stages, the self of the portraitist emerges as an instrument of inquiry, an eye on perspective taking, an ear that discerns nuances, and a voice that speaks and offers insights. (p.11)
As the portraitist is much more present in this field of inquiry, there must be more attention paid to providing a balanced perspective of narrative and critique in order to provide an objective view of the research subjects and the researcher.

Portraiture provides a viable method through which to explore CRT. As portraiture seeks to capture the essence of research participants, it complements tenets of CRT which seek to detail the lived experiences of people of color. Both portraiture and CRT acknowledge the researcher’s role in “shaping the story being presented to the world” (Chapman, 2005, p. 48). Chapman (2005) used portraiture and CRT in a study of ninth grade English students and English teachers. The students’ interviews revealed student interests and family dynamics while the teachers’ interviews revealed challenges in meeting the needs of their students. In acknowledging the portraitist in the research process, Chapman (2005) suggested that the “ways in which the researcher deals with her or his lenses or tools for construction must be shared with the reader” (p. 34). This allows for a continuous dialogue that situates the researcher at the center of shaping and representing the data presented in the findings.

**Strategic Diversity Leadership**

This study was informed by Strategic Diversity Leadership. Williams (2013) suggested a strategic diversity leadership framework that reframes diversity from a deficit perspective to one that “views diversity as an essential asset to increasing learning, fostering research, driving workplace productivity, enhancing morale, inspiring creativity, and improving the institution’s success and reputation” (p. 15). The principles of Strategic Diversity Leadership are:

1) Redefine issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion as fundamental to the organizational bottom line of mission fulfillment and institutional excellence.
2) Focus on creating systems that enable all students, faculty, and staff to thrive and achieve their maximum potential.

3) Achieve a more robust and integrated diversity approach that builds on prior diversity models and operates in a strategic, evidence-based, and data-driven manner, where accountability is paramount.

4) Focus diversity-related efforts to intentionally transform the institutional culture, not just to make tactical moves that lead to poorly integrated efforts and symbolic implementation alone.

5) Lead with a high degree of cultural intelligence and awareness of different identities and their significance in higher education. (Williams, 2013, p. 14-16)

Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) suggested that strategic diversity leadership involves administrators at every level “actively working to change the culture of their institutions to maximize the educational and cultural benefits of diversity” (p. 248). The Strategic Diversity Leadership framework served as a mechanism to further examine this study participants’ leadership abilities around diversity issues.

**Higher Education and Diversity Crisis Moments**

**History of Higher Education**

Higher education served as the context for this study. The discussion of the history of higher education traces the early formation of colleges and universities and includes a discussion of access in the early years of higher education. The history of higher education as it relates to underrepresented populations is discussed and the contemporary context of higher education is examined.
The leaders of the early colleges and universities placed little or no consideration for educating those who were not affluent White men (Thelin, 2004). Contextually, early colleges mirrored the challenges of society during that time regarding race, gender, access, and equity. “College was beyond the reach of most men, for lack of social status, and of all women, by virtue of their sex” (Solomon, 1985, p. 2). During this period, the primary role of a woman was to carry forth her role as a wife and a mother (Solomon, 1985). The education of women was limited to the level of education needed to “fill their prescribed roles in a hierarchical society” (Solomon, 1985, p. 3). Additionally, little regard was given to educate Blacks as a part of the new higher education system. Thelin (2004) suggested “there is no record of colonial commitment to the collegiate education of Black students, whether in the regular course of study or at special affiliated schools” (p. 30). The United States was still engaged in an active slave trade and still years away from the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. Although Blacks and women were largely denied access to the first colleges and universities, there was a considerable effort placed on educating Native Americans during the colonial period (Calloway, 2010; Wright, 1989). The establishment of Indian Colleges was seen as a profitable enterprise that capitalized on the interest of the English to invoke Christian doctrine and remake Native Americans “in the image of the European” (Wright, 1989, p. 55). Native American students did not fare well in these new educational environments, either falling prey to sickness, alcoholism, or the inherent differences in the teaching practices and philosophy of colonial education (Thelin, 2004). Similarly, Native American chiefs declared the colonial education model unfit for their sons. Both Native American chiefs and college officials sought ways to end the experiment of educating Native Americans (Thelin, 2004).
The question of the rights to citizenship was not answered for a few more years. The Civil War and the resulting victory of the northern states over the Southern Confederacy presented new challenges. States had to deal with the lingering question of the “Negro problem” of 4 million newly freed ex-slaves (DuBois, 1903; Anderson, 1988). The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 abolished slavery and freed all African Americans in the Southern states that were outside of Northern jurisdiction (Anderson, 1988). Most of the newly freed ex-slaves, however, lacked any level of education (Lovett, 2011). Under the laws of the “Old South” few slaves knew how to read and write, which continued well into the 20th century in many parts of the United States (Lovett, 2011; Anderson, 1988). As a result, a critical mass of free ex-slaves needed some level of educational training to assume their new roles in society. Many ex-slaves, in fact, had “‘the natural thirst of knowledge common to all men,’ a desire to intimidate educated whites, an attraction to the mystery of literate culture, the practical needs of business life, and the stimulating effects of freedom” (Anderson, 1988, p. 15), however, the quest for education did not come easy to ex-slaves. Some Whites wanted to maintain the political, economic, and social order of the Pre-Civil War era that kept Blacks and White working class laborers as second class citizens. Limiting their educational opportunities was a means to maintaining the status quo as well as protecting ideas of racial inferiority and a racial caste system (Anderson, 1988).

The conflict of maintaining current social order and cultivating an educated class of ex-slaves gave rise to the Hampton Model of normal and industrial education. Established in 1868, the Hampton Model used manual labor as a method of preparing Black teachers to “preach an ethic of hard toil or the ‘dignity of labor’” (Anderson, 1988, p. 35) to Black children in the South. Through this model, education was granted but through prescribed means for Blacks. Similarly, a few women’s colleges such as Mount Holyoke, Bryn Mawr, and Vassar were
emerging in the realm of higher education (Lucas, 1994). These schools for women pushed the
limits beyond the traditional role of finishing schools and established educational opportunities
that had been previously denied by colleges originally created to educate men.

Colleges and universities have become cornerstones of educational advancement in the
United States (Thelin, 2004). Since the early beginnings of colleges and universities the higher
education landscape has expanded to include Historically Black Colleges and Universities
(HBCUs), women’s colleges, and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs). Predominately White
Institutions (PWIs) provide access to education for students from a variety of backgrounds
(Thelin, 2003). Increased access, opportunities, and larger enrollments have made colleges and
universities an important area of study.

History of Diversity in Higher Education

Educating racially and ethnically diverse students began in post-Reconstruction and
continued through the creation of segregated colleges and universities. The Morrill Act of 1890
established separate colleges for African Americans and created what would be later known as
Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Wallenstein, 2008; Lovett, 2011). The
Morrill Act of 1890 did not, however, provide HBCUs that were comparable in offerings,
technology, and resources to their majority White institution counterparts (Samuels, 2004).
Separate but equal or more realistically, separate but unequal, continued to be the modus
operandi in higher education (Samuels, 2004; Wade, 2008). In 1954, a historic ruling in the case
of Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas (1954) changed the landscape of elementary
and secondary education with implications for higher education as well. Overturning the
previous ruling of Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), that upheld segregation and the use of separate
educational facilities for African Americans, Brown v. Board of Education required equal
educational facilities for all students. Although the specifics of the *Brown v. Board of Education* case referred to public elementary and secondary schools, the case was seen as having a profound impact on higher education by providing an avenue for challenges to specific institutional admissions practices at the state level (Dancy, 2010).

More recently, universities have continued to debate the question of their admissions policies and practices related to creating a diverse student body. Some of these policies and practices have been challenged through litigation. Notably, in the case *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), the court found the use of quota systems for admissions unconstitutional while upholding the use of programs that sought to enhance the diversity of the educational environment. Similarly and more contemporarily, higher education faced its most serious court challenge to creating diverse educational environments and student bodies through admissions practices with the *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003) and *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) Supreme Court cases. Commonly known as the Michigan cases, these cases further clarified the ability of universities to use race as a consideration for admission as in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), but not the creation of a point system as found unconstitutional in the *Gratz* ruling (Anderson, 2008).

The consideration of race as one factor in admissions can assist a university in creating an environment where diverse students are not only able to intellectually engage with other diverse students, but majority students are able to engage and learn from students who may be different from them. Race conscious admissions were again the center of the Supreme Court case *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* (2013). The plaintiff, Abigail Fisher, argued that she was denied admission to the University of Texas at Austin because students from underrepresented backgrounds were admitted while Fisher was denied. This case sought to overturn *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) allowing the consideration of race as one factor in considering admissions.
applications. Vincent, Sanders, and Ferguson (2012) asserted that a large public institution like the University of Texas at Austin, having experienced a history of exclusion, had the most diverse freshman class in its history in 2010. Creating a diverse freshman class would not have been possible with the guidelines outlined in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003).

The changing demographics of college campuses have also impacted diverse students at PWIs (Hurtado, 2007). Universities are now more focused on globalization and meeting the demands of a global marketplace (Anderson, 2008). A university’s ability to leverage its responsibility of producing educated and technically proficient citizens “is directly correlated with the degree to which it has embedded diversity and globalism concerns into the basic philosophy and infrastructure of the institution” (Anderson, 2008, p. 1). The responsibility of educating a diverse population of students has led universities to shift from focusing solely on African American students and culturally specific issues to a more holistic multicultural education approach (Rooks, 2006). The emergence of multicultural education does not seek to negate the work of cultural studies departments but seeks to create a space outside of the traditional Black/White, minority/majority framework, where learning within and across cultural contexts can occur (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Banks, 1993). Many multicultural education scholars would argue that this new contextual space is where real conversations on the intersections of race, class, gender/gender identity, and socioeconomic status take place and, provides a new space for learning and introspection (Sleeter & Grant, 1999; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002).

**Crisis Moments in Higher Education**

Crisis management in higher education can be traced back to the early beginnings of universities and the period of *in loco parentis*, meaning in place of the parent (Nuss, 1996).
During that time, faculty and administrators acted as parental figures or guardians while students completed their college studies (Nuss, 1996). The strict policies and structures about student activities and student behavior forced students to reject the notion of *in loco parentis* (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). The rejection and legal challenges by students to *in loco parentis* caused many colleges and universities to promote an ethic of care model whereby university staff and faculty could provide a supportive environment to assist students in their growth and development (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007; Stamatakos, 1989).

Rollo and Zdziarski (2007) described a crisis as an inevitable event that will impact any organization. “Although some crises do provide warning signs, crises are often unpredictable. Yet despite their unpredictability, crises should not be unexpected or unanticipated” (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007, p. 25). Zdziarski (2006) defined a crisis as “an event, which is often sudden or unexpected, that disrupts the normal operations of the institution or its educational mission and threatens the well-being of personnel, property, financial resources, and/or reputation of the institution” (p. 5). Sherwood and McKelfresh (2007) similarly defined crisis management as “the umbrella term that encompasses all activities when an organization prepares for and responds to a significant event” (p. 3). Boin and ‘t Hart (2003) rebuked the traditional notion of crises as compartmentalized events that occur within a particular time period. Boin and ‘t Hart (2003) suggested that crises should be treated “as extended periods of high threat, high uncertainty, and high politics that disrupt a wide range of social, political, and organizational processes. Crises are dynamic and chaotic processes, not discrete events sequenced neatly on a linear time scale” (Boin & ‘t Hart, 2003, p. 545).

The first recorded instance of a major crisis moment in higher education was a campus shooting at the University of Austin in 1966. Charles Whitman, a former United States Marine,
entered the observation deck on the twenty-eighth floor of the Texas Tower and opened fire, killing fourteen people and injuring dozens more (Rollo, 1999). A series of other crisis moments soon followed. On May 4, 1970, four students were killed by National Guard troops at Kent State University during a protest of the military draft and the war in Vietnam (McPhail, Schweingruber, & McCarthy, 1998; Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). A crisis moment on the campus of Lehigh University in 1986 forever changed how colleges and universities reported crimes on campuses. Jeanne Clery was found raped and strangled in her college residence hall. Her death and the ensuing national outrage about the lack of safety measures on campus led to the passing of the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, also known as the Clery Act (Rollo, 1999; Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007).

The first instance of immediate coverage following a campus crisis moment happened at the University of Florida in 1990 after four students were found murdered over a period of five days (Rollo, 1999; Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). The prospect of a serial killer targeting college students caused one of the first instances of documented national coverage for a crisis moment on a college campus. The response time for campus administrators to speak with media was reduced from days to hours (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). In 1999, twelve students were killed at Texas A & M University while constructing bonfires as part of the traditional celebration of the rivalry football game between Texas A & M and the University of Texas (Gortner & Pennebaker, 2003; Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). This incident also captured the media spotlight and was one of the first campus crisis moments where those involved were able to communicate instantaneously with family and the media by cell phone. This created another level of crisis management communication as universities grappled with controlling messages and information from multiple sources.
Contemporary crisis moments on college campuses have included mass shootings and natural disasters (Fox & Savage, 2009). Mass shootings on college campuses have become among the most pressing issues, shifting the perception of institutions from carefree places to vulnerable targets by individual or group perpetrators (Heilbrun, Dvoskin, & Heilbrun, 2009). Asmussen and Creswell (1995) found that feelings of denial, fear, and concerns for safety were prevalent after a graduate student attempted to open fire in a classroom on the campus of a large public university. In a content analysis of 20 reports from campus safety departments from across the country after the Virginia Tech Shooting in 2007, Fox and Savage (2009) asserted that colleges and universities are vulnerable to crisis incidents because of the large landscape and multiple buildings, but they caution against creating an atmosphere of fear. “By overacting to Virginia and other widely publicized incidents, not only are college administrators instituting security measures that may well prove ineffective, but they are also undermining the carefree atmosphere of campus life. They chance making students feel like walking targets, thereby intensifying the level of anxiety” (Fox & Savage, 2009, p. 1466). Wang and Hutchins (2010) found that developing crisis leaders, providing crisis management training, developing crisis management programs, and facilitating communication were important for campus leaders to consider in the wake of the Virginia Tech tragedy.

Diversity Crisis Moments

There is a dearth of literature on diversity crisis moments in higher education. A few diversity crisis moments, however, are of particular interest to this study. In the late 1960s, students at San Francisco State College (now San Francisco State University) demanded the formation of ethnic studies departments for marginalized groups. When university administrators did not accept their list of demands, a hostile five month protest ensued which resulted in the
formation of the first Black Studies (now more commonly known as African American Studies) department on a college campus (Rooks, 2006). Since that time, cultural studies departments have added to the academic discourse by allowing traditionally disenfranchised groups to be conceptualized as the “subject rather than object in the European experience” (Asante, 1998, p. 22). Farrell and Jones (1998) found that there continues to be conflict between underrepresented populations and majority populations. Students from underrepresented populations have experienced varying degrees of harassment and violence on their college campuses (Farrell & Jones, 1998).

Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast in 2005 leaving many colleges and universities unable to continue with the fall academic semester (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). The category 5 storm devastated colleges in New Orleans including some of the noted Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the nation, thereby displacing a significant number of students of color. Farazmand (2007) suggested that the strategic deficiencies in preparation for Hurricane Katrina were a result of short-term versus long-term planning and the inability to coordinate time, people, and resources.

Summary

The literature review provided an examination of the tenets of Critical Race Theory. Counterstories, racial realism, expansive vs. restrictive, interest convergence, Whiteness as property, and social change were components of this study. Counterstories have been used to give voice to people from underrepresented populations in a higher education context (Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solórzano, 2009; Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011; Burden, Harrison, & Hodge, 2005; Mthethwa-Sommers, 2012; Fujimoto, 2012; Wang & Hutchins, 2010). The understanding of racial dynamics and positionality brings authenticity to Bell’s (1995) concept of
racial realism. While it is argued that racial realism no longer exists in a post-Obama context, (Hurtado, 1992; Steele, 1997; Clark, Fasching-Varner, & Brimhall-Vargas, 2012), microaggressions and resulting racial battle fatigue are two examples that support the belief that racial realism still has relevance in higher education (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007, Solórzano, 1998; Burden, Harrison, & Hodge, 2005). Expansive view vs. restrictive view of equality examines a holistic approach to examining the systemic impact of past discrimination in an effort to prevent future instances of injustice rather than examining past injustices singular moments (Crenshaw, 1995; Rousseau & Tate, 2003; Dixson & Rousseau, 2005). Educational systems can be spaces where interest convergence can be most visible (Bell, 1995; Delgado, 1989; Castagno & Lee, 2007; Harper, 2009). Whiteness as property assigns a property value to being White which has implications for underrepresented populations navigating spaces created for the dominant group (Harris, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Social change has provided underrepresented populations the opportunity to find spaces and networks on college campuses that allow for community building and ways to resist unwelcoming campus climates (Gildersleeve, Croom, & Vasquez, 2011; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009; Patton, 2006). Mass shootings and natural disasters have dominated the current literature on crisis management in higher education (Fox & Savage, 2009; Heilbrun, Dvoskin, & Heilbrun, 2009).

Using a Critical Race Theory framework, diversity crisis moments in higher education are examined in this study. Few studies examine diversity crisis moments in higher education (Farrell & Jones, 1988) and fewer studies examine diversity crisis moments from a Critical Race Theory perspective. The use of CRT fills the gap in the existing literature between the salience of
race and power in a higher education context and resistance to exclusionary institutional practices that cause diversity crisis moments to occur.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research was the preferred research method used for the study of diversity crisis moments at higher education institutions in the southern region of the United States to better understand the perspectives and experiences of those charged with managing diversity at these institutions. Merriam (1998) described qualitative research as “an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible” (p. 5). Positioning diversity crisis moments as social phenomenon lent to a qualitative research approach, as race, gender, and sexual orientation, the key elements that serve as the impetus for diversity crisis moments, are socially constructed. Although crisis moments have been studied in corporate contexts, the concept of crisis management as part of a higher education framework is relatively new (Rollo & Zdziarski, 2007). As suggested in Chapter 2, there have been few studies of diversity crisis moments in higher education (Farrell & Jones, 1988).

As articulated in Chapter 1, the following research questions guided the study: how do administrators conceptualize a diversity crisis moment on their campus? Are university administrators prepared to address a diversity crisis? What factors do university administrators consider when addressing these types of crises? What lessons, if any, are learned from moments of crisis? And finally, how do university administrators move the campus community beyond a crisis? These research questions yielded data to examine diversity crisis moments in higher education.

Researcher Positionality

In preparation for conducting this research study, it was necessary to situate myself and explore the lenses through which I view the world. My movement through the world, and
subsequently my movement through this study, was observed through the multiple identities by which I identify (Peshkin, 1988). The multiplicity of my experiences were shaped through identifying as an African-American, identifying as a woman, being raised in a middle-class socio-economic status, being educated in both public and private schools, and working as a mid-level administrator in diversity in a higher education setting.

While pursuing my undergraduate degree biological sciences with an emphasis in Microbiology, I held positions in student government, worked in the University’s Student Affairs office, and was a student member of the University’s judicial hearing board. I was able to see first-hand how administrators handled the killing of a student in the residential hall, hazing, and the evacuation of the campus due to a chemical spill. Through my involvement as a college student, my work in the Student Affairs office, and witnessing these crisis moments, I recognized my desire to work in a higher education setting. The crisis moments, while situated at an HBCU, heightened my curiosity for being on the ground level of planning, assessment, and managing crisis moments. My desire to focus on diversity crisis moments in higher education was enhanced because the crisis moments I experienced were framed in a diverse context.

My racial identity was formed at an early age. I cannot remember a time when I did not understand that I was African American. That is not to say that such a time did not exist, but my earliest recollections of my life experiences functioned with an understanding that there were differences that existed between Whites and Blacks. I lived in Louisiana, known as the Deep South, where the historical struggles between Blacks and Whites still exist. I consider my church and my early educational experiences of attending a predominately African American Baptist Church and African American private, faith-based schools as positive reinforcements of my African American identity, although I was not be shielded from the realities of the negative
experiences of being African American. My first experience with racism and prejudice came while on a shopping trip with my mom while I was still in elementary school. While in the store a young White boy around my age taunted me with racial slurs. Not until middle school did I have the opportunity to engage with Whites in a way that would deconstruct some of my personal attitudes that I attributed to that experience that happened years before. I believe my early experiences with my own diversity crisis moment developed my interest in researching diversity crisis moments in larger contexts.

I always situated myself on the feminine end of the gender expression spectrum (Lobel, Gerwirtz, Pras, Shoeshine-Rokach, & Ginton, 1999). As I matured, I continued to embrace being a girl and growing into a young woman. I embraced the socially constructed and socially accepted rites of passage that came with being a young woman such as earrings, make-up, heels, and clothes. In high school I was a debutante and was formally introduced into society. In the African American community becoming a debutante was the socially accepted ‘thing to do’ for a young woman of certain social connections and financial means.

After college and a short stint as a high school science teacher, I began working at Louisiana State University (LSU) and obtained my master’s degree from LSU while working full-time. Currently I am a mid-level administrator working in the University’s diversity office. In my administrative capacity I have professional, personnel, and fiscal oversight of a university department; however, I am not classified as part of the senior leadership team (Mills, 2009). Specifically, my work as director of a Multicultural Affairs office encompasses the recruitment and retention of students of color and other underrepresented groups. My office provides programs and services to assist underrepresented students in their college experience while providing opportunities for students from all backgrounds to engage in culturally relevant
programming, training, and leadership activities. My role as a director also situates me as a point of contact for any diversity crisis moments that may occur on campus. My own experience with a diversity crisis moment in 2005 provided context for this study.

My experiences as a director have been both challenging and rewarding. I have the responsibility of cultivating diverse experiences for students at LSU so that they can have an inclusive, well-rounded college experience that facilitates their own growth and development, while highlighting the progress of the University in enhancing its diversity efforts. At times the institution has not done all that it could and should do to enhance diversity. My position is precarious as I constantly reassess how I work to recruit and retain students of color at a University that has not truly placed diversity as its highest priority. As I continue to work within the University to make changes to establish institutional practices and ways of working with underrepresented students, I know that change and real progress may not happen quickly. Resistance to and frustration with lack of change is when diversity crises can occur.

**Study Design**

**Case Study Research**

Case study was the research method selected for this study. Yin (2009) stated that “the case study is used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena” (p. 4). Yin (2009) further described the need for case studies that “arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena” (p. 4). Moore, Stephen, & Quartaroli (2012) explained case study research as “an investigative approach used to thoroughly describe complex phenomena, such as recent events, important issues, or programs, in ways to unearth new and deeper understanding of these phenomena” (p.243). The study of diversity crisis moments at higher education institutions yielded a deeper
understanding of the occurrence of these phenomena on college campuses. Merriam (1998) described the impact of case study design as a “process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. Insights gleaned from case studies can directly influence policy, practice, and future research” (p. 19).

A multiple case study design was used in conducting this research study. Multiple case research design studies have more than one single-case study and have at least one research question (Stake, 2006). This multiple case research study had four single-case holistic studies; as described by Yin (2009), holistic case studies are a single unit of analysis within two or more cases. Each university selected as a part of the research study provided the context and the specific diversity crisis moment served as a case.

**Epistemological Approach**

Critical Theory (CT) is guided by the critique of established institutional power dynamics (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002; Merzirow, 1981; McCarthy, 1978; Fraser, 1985). As a guiding principle, Critical Theory uses the critique of society as a mechanism to challenge and liberate those that have been oppressed (Merzirow, 1981). The origin of Critical Theory can be traced to the Horkheimer’s sociology which emerged from the Frankfurt School in 1937, and later was expanded by Habermas as a socio-political vehicle to liberate oppressed groups (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). The goal of Critical Theory is to uncover, challenge, and ultimately change instances of institutional oppression (McCarthy, 1978).

Critical Theory was the epistemological paradigm of the dissertation research. The critique of society in a higher education context complemented the use of Critical Race Theory as a theoretical framework to examine diversity crisis moments that occur on college campuses. The tenets of Critical Race Theory were used to contextualize the experiences of mid-level
administrators charged with the responsibility of doing social and cultural capacity building and education in established institutional contexts with power dynamics that disenfranchise marginalized communities. As a mid-level diversity administrator, I brought my experiences and understandings of the institutional power and dynamics of higher education to the research study. My understanding of diversity offices also situated my critique of the diversity crisis moments and the institutions where the diversity crisis moments occurred. Strategic Diversity Leadership provided context to understanding the leadership experiences of the mid-level diversity management professionals.

**Sampling**

This research study was conducted using convenient purposeful sampling, which “… lends more strength in case study research because data sources, participants, or cases are selected by how much can be learned from them” (Moore, Stephen, & Quartaroli, 2012, p. 253). The study participants were mid-level diversity administrators from the Southeastern Conference (SEC), a federation of universities that serves member institutions for competitive collegiate sports. Originally established in 1932, the SEC is comprised of fourteen schools divided into an east division and a west division. Since its inception, the SEC has expanded or invited universities to become member institutions. In 1990, the University of Arkansas and the University of South Carolina became members of the SEC and in 2012, Texas A & M University and the University of Missouri became members. Located in the southern region of the United States, these schools were the sites of some of the most contested integration cases in the country during the Civil Rights Movement, and thus were ideal locations for conducting this study.

The established criteria narrowed the list of potential participants. The participants were colleagues and were a convenient sample because they were in similar positions on their
respective college campuses; this facilitated both access and understanding. The participants were a purposeful sample because their selection was intentional. Creswell (2007) suggested that purposeful sampling can inform how the research problem is understood and the phenomenon being studied. My established connections with the directors and/or assistant directors in the multicultural affairs offices or multicultural centers in the Southeastern Conference generated positive responses to my requests for interviews.

Data Collection

The sample for the research study consisted of four mid-level diversity management professionals charged with coordinating diversity efforts on college campuses in the Southeastern Conference. Stake (2006) and Creswell (2007) suggested selecting at least 4 cases to study. The selection of cases allowed cross-case synthesis. Participants were selected based on pre-determined criteria of 1) total enrollment of institution between 18,000 and 36,000 students, 2) length of time participant was engaged in diversity work (over six months), 3) organizational situation in the institution’s diversity office, 4) designation as a professional at the assistant director or director level longer than 6 months, and 5) university designation as a public institution. These pre-determined criteria provided the basis for narrowing the number of participants to a manageable data set.

Participant Selection

The selection of study participants was based on a variety of factors. On factor was an established institution criteria. Selected institutions had a designation as a public or private institution and an enrollment between 18,000 and 36,000 students. Participants in a temporary employment status were eliminated. Participants who were classified as an Interim Director also were eliminated and participants who served in the mid-level role (i.e., Assistant Director or
Direct or) for less than six months were eliminated. These criteria yielded four participants for this study.

Table 1: Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEC Institution</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Position Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cindy</td>
<td>The University of Acme</td>
<td>~ 25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>University of Acme</td>
<td>~ 20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phillip</td>
<td>Acme University</td>
<td>~ 20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaunda</td>
<td>Acme State University</td>
<td>~ 30,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four participants was the optimum number for this study. Merriman (1998) suggested for multiple case studies the “…the greater the variation across the cases, the more compelling an interpretation is likely to be” (pg. 40). Although a specific number of cases was not recommended, Creswell (2007) suggested no more than four or five case studies while Stake (2006) suggested at least four case studies for a multi-case design. Four institutions provided a manageable data set while simultaneously providing for variation and the hopes of a compelling interpretation.

Pilot Study

After the participants were identified and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was obtained for the study, a pilot study was conducted with a director of a multicultural affairs office that was not affiliated with the SEC. Conducted in the participant’s office, the semi-structured interview protocol questions developed for the research study were used for the 30 minute interview. The participant reviewed and signed the consent form. The interview was
transcribed, sent to the participant to ensure accuracy and the interview protocol questions were refined for clarity.

**Research Study**

After the questions were refined, the study participants were contacted via email to gauge interest in participation. Interviews were set up at a convenient day and time for the study participants. Interviews took place in person in the study participants’ offices on their campuses. Before beginning the interview the consent form was reviewed with the participants and they were informed that they could elect not to participate in the study at any time. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol. The interview protocol included open-ended questions to obtain the most in-depth information. This interview-guided approach provided the opportunity to cover the same topics with each participant but still provided “a relatively unstructured interaction between the interviewer and interviewee” (Johnson & Christensen, 2008, p. 208). The interviews lasted between 50 minutes to one hour and nine minutes and were recorded to ensure accuracy. The interviews were transcribed and sent to each participant for review to clarify any errors made during transcription. Follow up questions were asked via email. Each study participant was assigned a pseudonym to provide anonymity.

This research study was autoethnographic as I described my own experiences as a mid-level diversity management professional at an SEC school. Creswell (2007) suggested that researchers who wish to study themselves use autoethnography or biographical memoir to capture one’s experiences. Reed-Danahay (1997) described autoethnography as placing the self within the social context of a self-narrative. As described by Reed-Danahay (1997), my autoethnography was classified as an ethnic autobiography because I identified as a member of an ethnic minority group.
I collected additional sources of information related to diversity crisis moments at each institution referring to Yin’s six sources of evidence for conducting case studies: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts (2009). In addition to the participants’ interviews, I collected newspaper articles from the institution’s student newspaper when it was noted that a diversity crisis moment had occurred, information from each institution’s website, strategic plans, diversity brochures, and any existing crisis management protocols. I also included my field notes as a source of evidence.

Data Analysis

After the data was collected, the interviews were transcribed and coded; the constant comparative method was used for the coding. Johnson and Christensen (2008) suggested that the constant comparative method involved a “constant interplay among the researcher, the data, and the developing theory” (p.413). The data was first examined through open coding to find initial concepts and ideas on diversity crisis moments and other important findings from the data. The transcripts and initial codes were reviewed by two researchers to establish reliability. After the initial categories were identified, axial coding was conducted to place the codes into categories as well as to examine the categories for possible relationships. Selective coding and data saturation occurred as part of the data analysis. Codes were examined cross-case and between interviews and documents. To establish validity and trustworthiness, the data was triangulated using multiple sources of evidence. Triangulation was explored and achieved through interviews, newspaper articles, diversity strategic plans, and crisis management plans. Moore, Stephen, & Quartaroli (2012) suggested that triangulation seeks to find agreement “among evidence collected from multiple sources and using various methods” (p. 249). Obtaining similar findings
through two or more sources of evidence increased the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, thereby making it more credible (Moore, Stephen & Quartaroli, 2012).

**Subjectivity**

As a researcher studying diversity crisis moments at higher education institutions in the southern region, I brought my own set of subjectivities to this research study. Specifically, as a mid-level diversity management professional at Louisiana State University, I had my own experience with diversity crisis moments, as I was promoted to director of multicultural affairs one month before a diversity crisis moment occurred on campus. It was largely because of my experience that the idea for this research study was conceived. I acknowledged the need to preserve the integrity of the research process by using my experience to inform but not hinder the collection of data as a part of this research study.

Chapter 3 provided the methodology for the research study. The interlude chapter provides a counterstory that highlights the major findings in chapters 5 and 6.
CHAPTER FOUR: INTERLUDE

Karl Cunningham loved to grill. He was known by his friends as Karl “KC Barbeque” in recognition of his culinary abilities. Grilling was Karl’s obsession. Any occasion was a chance for Karl to grill. It was one of the few places he found himself being “at peace.”

Over the years he perfected his famous, top-secret dry rub recipe. It was so top secret he committed it to memory so that it would not fall into the hands of someone else. Not even his wife, with whom he shared so many of his private thoughts, hopes, and dreams, knew the recipe. For Karl, it was the one secret he could not share.

Karl was very particular about grills. Though he had attended college and graduated with a degree in Psychology and worked as a social worker, his real passion was for what he called “the art of grilling.” Karl searched for years for the perfect apparatus in which to create the best proteins. He searched the internet for hours reading about all the latest grills on the market. In Karl’s mind, many grills came up short. They all had good elements but no grill had everything Karl desired. Karl thought, “How hard could it be to have someone create the perfect grill? I like to grill. I could do that."

After many years of trial and error which included Karl trying unsuccessfully to build his own grill in his backyard, he found the grill of his dreams, the Grill-o-matic520, marketed as the grill for the “serious grill master.” Karl thought the Grill-o-matic520 was more than a great product; he deemed it a grilling masterpiece. Karl saved for the fateful day that he would be able to purchase the Grill-o-matic520. He dreamed about it at night. His dreams were always the same. He received a call of a grilling emergency. The person calling was in distress and needed Karl to avert a grilling catastrophe. Undoubtedly, someone had made the wrong choice in selecting a grill. The smaller pieces of meat would be burned beyond recognition and the larger
pieces would be raw on the inside. He would pack up his silver Grill-o-matic 520 with his custom designed initials on the front and rush to the site of grilling emergency and save the day. Each dream would end the same way; he would leave the event to a standing ovation for saving the day and it was in large part to the Grill-o-matic 520. Karl was certain that the Grill-o-matic 520 was going to be the grill for which he had waited so long to purchase. On the day he went to purchase the Grill-o-matic 520, Karl marked the special occasion by dressing in his “I love to grill” t-shirt to bring the Grill-o-matic 520 home. Karl asked the salesperson to take a picture of him with the grill in the store.

Over the next two months, Karl used the Grill-o-matic 520 every day. His wife and children begged for Karl to give the grill a break but Karl refused. He was passionate about grilling and even more passionate about the Grill-o-matic 520. One day Karl saw an advertisement for a cooking demonstration at his favorite Home Depot. The local Home Depot always had cooking demonstrations but this particular one caught Karl’s eye. The newspaper caption read, ‘Join us this Saturday as our corporate directors will be on hand to give you the secrets to the best food you’ve ever tasted using the Grill-o-matic 520.’ Karl promptly made a note of the date and time.

Just like clockwork on the Saturday of the demonstration of the 520, Karl was the first to arrive. He wanted to get there early to make sure he had a front row seat. After a few minutes the room started to fill and everyone was seated. Karl noticed a young man putting charcoal on the grill when he arrived. ‘Pretty good selection,’ he said to himself, noting the brand of charcoal. “Everyone. My name is David. I’m glad you could be here today. I’m going to show you why the Grill-o-matic 520 is the best product out and give you some grilling tips. Sounds good? Let’s get started. First, one of the features of the 520 that I think is pretty amazing is the starter. You are
probably used to using newspaper and a match to get your grill started. As you can see, I just push the button and it starts right up.” (At this point David pushed a button but nothing happened.) “Let me try this again,” David said. (David again pushed the button but nothing happened) Then he heard a voice from the crowd. “I think the button you’re looking for is on the right,” Karl said. David looked out into the audience finding the source of the instructions. With a sheepish grin David said, “Thanks. It seems like somebody here knows a little about the 520.” The crowd laughed. David found the button on the right side just as Karl had instructed, pressed the button, and used a lighter to light the charcoal. It started right up.

About twenty minutes into the demonstration David began to add the meat to the grill.

“Today, I’m going to show you a trick to making your burgers better.” David added the perfectly sized ground beef patties to the grill and talked about the best way to prevent a burger from being overcooked but to Karl it was just noise in the background. He was focused on the patties. “They’re grilling too fast,” he said to himself. David also noticed the predicament with the burgers. “Well, folks, looks like this is more of a demonstration of what not to do with your 520,” he said. “Just move them to the edge away from the direct heat,” Karl said. David mouthed “Thank you” to Karl. As Karl prepared to leave after the demonstration, David approached him and said,

David: What’s your name?
Karl: Karl. Karl Cunningham
David: David Smith. I’m the Regional Director for Grill-o-matic, Inc.
Karl: Good to meet you, David
David: You helped me out a lot today. My first time doing a demonstration on the 520 and I messed it up.
Karl: Don’t sweat it. It happens to the best of us. Other than not being able to light the grill and almost burning the meat, you did a good job. (chuckles)

David: I know. My boss would kill me if he knew.

Karl: Well, I don’t think anyone will tell. Look, it was good meeting you but I’ve got some grilling of my own to do at home. It was nice meeting you. Next time, remember the starter button is on the right side. (Karl turned and began to walk away)

David: Hey, Karl, wait up. (David caught up to Karl) Listen, we could use somebody like you in our company. You seem to be passionate about grilling and our 520. We have a position open in the department that oversees the development, production, and marketing of the 520 that you’d be perfect for.

Karl: Me? Really? A job with your company?

David: Why not? You like to grill and you know how to operate a 520.

Karl: Yeah, but…ok. I’ll check it out. What do I need to do?

David: Here’s the address to our distribution office. It’s about 45 minutes from here. Meet me next Wednesday at 9 am. We’ll take a tour and I’ll introduce you to some people.

Karl: Next Wednesday, 9 am. I’ll be there.

Over the next few days, Karl could barely contain his excitement. He rode by the distribution warehouse three times, timing different routes to make sure he wasn’t late. He researched online anything he could find on the Grill-o-matic520 although the product was so new there wasn’t much information on it. On the morning Karl was to meet David, he put on his best black suit and his favorite tie, his red tie with grills, tongs, and burgers. Karl arrived at the distribution warehouse thirty minutes early. After waiting a few minutes in the lobby, David
appeared from a side door, extended his hand and said, “Good morning, Karl. Welcome to Grill-o-matic, Inc.”

Two years later

Karl is sitting in his office at Grill-o-matic, Inc. The plaque on the door reads ‘Karl Cunningham, Director of Training and Product Development.’ On the wall are photos of Karl with smiling customers with their Grill-o-matic520. Some photos are of customers with the Grill-o-matic 530, the newest model that hit stores right before the start of the summer season. Karl loves his job. He believes that he made the right decision to join the company. The work is not always easy but he enjoys it. He does not always understand the terminology or the notes from the engineers but if his gut tells him it is ‘ok’ then he usually trusts their decision. The 530 was a gut decision.

In the two years since Karl arrived there had been few opportunities for training. There was a conference or a workshop here or there but no real way for Karl to understand the inner workings of his job. He has been so busy with his job responsibilities that he did not have been able to attend them anyway. At times, Karl feels overwhelmed but he is passionate about grilling and the Grill-o-matic products so he keeps at it.

There weren’t many ways to improve upon the 520 but the engineers found a way. Karl’s first big product launch, the Grill-o-matic 530, met with much success. With the grills on the shelves, the next step was product demonstration. Karl decided that the company should host a cook-off for amateur chefs. The winner would receive a cash prize and a Grill-o-matic 530. Karl also arranged for the event to be televised on the local television station. It was to be the grilling event of the year. The idea was genius.
Several months later, five amateur chefs competed for the title of “Grill-o-master.” In front of them were five silver Grill-o-matic530s in a perfect line. Each chef had a table stocked with the ingredients they would use for the competition. The three men and two women, who were selected to compete from home videos sent into headquarters, had on matching black chef’s coats and hats. It was the perfect picture of diverse grilling users: a beautiful day in the park, a crowd cheering on their favorite amateur chef, and shiny Grill-o-matic530s.

Everything was ready for the event to begin. Karl stepped to the microphone and said, “Welcome, Everyone. I’m Karl Cunningham, Director of Training and Development for Grill-o-matic, Inc. Today we are here to watch the best amateur chefs compete for prizes and the title of Grill-o-master. Chefs, you know the rules. When I say go, you have 30 minutes to complete your dish using the Grill-o-matic530. Are you ready? On my mark, push your starters. 3-2-1...Go!”

With cameras rolling, each of the five amateur chefs pressed the starter button on the assigned Grill-o-matic530.

At that moment a large force knocked Karl to the ground. As he tried to get up he could only see a ball of black smoke and fire. He heard screams and saw people running around.

“What in the hell happened?” Karl said. One of the grills malfunctioned and exploded, all before a live audience and the local public broadcasting channel. Luckily there was no loss of life but there were several injuries. Three of the five contestants were hospitalized. One of the contestants conducted interviews from his hospital bed about his experience. The explosion was the top story on the six o’clock and ten o’clock news. The footage was played over and over on every news channel. It caught the attention of the national news outlets. Karl had a crisis on his hands.
In a strategy meeting at Grill-o-matic, Karl’s boss, the Vice President of Development, weighed potential strategies to deal with the situation. Karl was very nervous. He had not experienced anything of this magnitude before. Although there had been many meetings about the incident, Karl had not been invited. At times, he only heard bits and pieces of information in the hallways but rarely had any direct conversation to solicit his opinion. It appeared that decisions were made without him. Finally, at one of the last strategy meetings held that week, Karl received an invitation to attend. After deliberating the next course of action, Karl’s boss turned to him and said, “Karl, how are we going to handle this?” Karl took a moment to think and responded, “I think we need to go on the offensive. We need to increase our marketing and we need to produce more Grill-o-matics.” “Don’t you think we need to wait until we get the investigation report from the engineers?” another staff member said. “No.” Karl said. “I have a gut feeling it was human error. This is a good product. We need to let the people know how good it is...”
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS: PORTRAITS IN VIEW

This chapter is intended to provide an overview of how each study participant came to the work of diversity, how the participants view the work of diversity on their campuses, including how they perceive challenging situations, and finally what, if any, insights they each have about diversity crisis moments. Initially when analyzing, coding, and organizing data, I intended to alternate among the participants within each sub area. Such an approach, however, did not contextualize each study participant, and consequently did not provide a powerful set of insights into their experiences as mid-level diversity management professionals. Consequently, this chapter begins with a short analytic portrait (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005) of each participant. In her work on portraiture, Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) suggested that the researcher defines the focus of inquiry and also navigates relationships with study participants, traces emergent themes, and creates the narrative. Portraiture allowed me to present the findings about each participant and me before discussing commonalities and differences among the portraits. After all four portraits are presented I provide analysis and discussion, drawing on the major areas discussed in each portrait.

Each portrait begins by exploring the question “How did you come to find yourself in your role as a mid-level diversity management professional?” From that question, the study participants’ discuss their views of diversity before exploring their roles in challenging situations on campus. Next, the portraits highlight the participants’ understanding of diversity crisis moments, followed by examples from their contexts and including a common discussion brought up by each participant relative to George Zimmerman and the Trayvon Martin shooting. Additionally, applicable tenets of CRT are discussed with each participant. The chapter ends with a larger discussion of the themes found within the portraits.
The portraits progress from Cindy, to Mike, to Phillip, and end with my autoethnographic portrait. I believe that this progression highlights Cindy’s and Mike’s rather traditional pathway toward entering the work of diversity management, whereas Philip represented a newer paradigm for this work that included more specific training and education. My portrait provides a hybrid between traditional and new ways of conceptualizing diversity work as my entry path was much like those of Cindy and Mike, and I have acquired training and education along the process that was similar to Philip’s experiences.

**Cindy**

Cindy was the Associate Dean for Multicultural Programming at The University of Acme. A middle aged African-American woman, Cindy was soft spoken yet clearly someone who prided herself on the relationships she had with the students of color on her campus. As we spoke in her overflowing office, I noticed a home-made mural of thank you notes that covered the only window in the office.

We began with some small talk before I asked how it was that Cindy found herself doing this work. Cindy stated she had been working in diversity for 23 years, and had held a variety of positions focused around diversity. When asked how she came to the profession and her current position, Cindy stated:

I did not have a college degree…I ended up here actually because my mother called the Vice Chancellor here and said I need for my daughter to be on a college campus. He hired me the same day as a Senior Secretary and, um, he [Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs] had actually been hired to do diversity work on campus. So, totally by accident I ended up in that position as a secretary advising the gospel choir and the Black Student Union…And so I left the position and went to school but I continued to work in graduate assistantships that were diversity related. Held a GAship with the Assistant Dean of Students part of his title included Multicultural Affairs and, um, then ended up in this position. So, I can't say that I picked the work. It kind of landed in my lap. But, um, it was a good fit so I've remained in it.
Cindy explained she did not intentionally choose a career in diversity work; as she put it, she fell into the work and has remained in it. Positions such as Cindy’s can provide practical learning experiences when coupled with educational opportunities, but cannot replace formal preparation and training opportunities. One of Cindy’s responsibilities was to serve as the ‘go to’ person for student related diversity issues on her campus. As the designated go to person on student diversity issues, Cindy should be adequately equipped and trained for the issues she will face.

Using the Strategic Diversity Leadership principle of leading “with a high degree of cultural intelligence and awareness of different identities” (Williams, 2013, p. 15) Cindy appeared to fall short of this proficiency. Her responses were based solely on her current or past experiences. She did not provide a critical analysis about diversity in general and, specifically, about diversity on her campus. When asked about underrepresented populations or specific instances related to diversity on her campus, Cindy responded three times with phrases such as “It’s just my opinion” or “I have heard.” These responses suggested a level of hesitancy in articulating a definitive position when discussing topics or issues related to diversity. Additionally, Cindy did not convey a high level of awareness about different underrepresented student populations as prescribed in Strategic Diversity Leadership principle five, which suggests the importance of leading “with a high degree of cultural intelligence and awareness of different identities” (Williams, 2013, p.16). She was drawn to diversity work and was passionate about the work; however, the lack of specific education training and skills in diversity inhibited Cindy’s ability to think broadly about diversity issues on her campus.

**View of Diversity on Campus**

Having worked at The University of Acme for 23 years, Cindy was able to provide an all-encompassing view of diversity on her campus. Cindy noted a shift in the perception of diversity
efforts at the University. When asked if she thought the university was proactive or reactive in relation to diversity issues on her campus, Cindy stated that the university was moving in the direction of being more proactive rather than reactive. Cindy said:

At times that's [diversity] been met with like we're just doing things based on perception. Why do we have to do that? I do think that's changing. I would without a doubt [say] that in the past we've been a very reactive institution. I would say that we are definitely becoming an institution that is committed and wants to be proactive.

Cindy acknowledged that in the past, instead of proactively working to create a more inclusive campus, efforts were based on being reactive as situations occurred. The University of Acme becoming more proactive can be attributed to the CRT restrictive vs. expansive tenet. In our discussion, Cindy noted that the percentage of African American students enrolled at her university was above fifteen percent. She attributed that increase to a scholarship program that was not awarded on the basis of race, but rather provided opportunities for a number of African American students to receive funding through the scholarship program. While the University expanded its enrollment to include a record number of African American students enrolled, the university remained restrictive in decisions made by university administration, decisions that directly impact students of color, including housing for traditionally African American Greek-lettered fraternities and sororities, and the demonstrated organizational priority of diversity work. The restrictive practices were in opposition to the expansive philosophy of increasing a diverse enrollment.

**Role in Challenging Situations**

Mid-level diversity management professionals can experience challenging situations in their role, some of which can be related specifically to a diversity crisis moment or to another challenging situation. When asked about her role in challenging situations, Cindy asserted that
her role was “certainly undefined” for such situations should a major diversity crisis occur.

Reflecting on her role in challenging situations, Cindy discussed the ambiguity of defining diversity on her campus as well as the challenges with how the university viewed her role and the role of another department on campus that did similar work but from a social justice framework. In particular, she distinguished a student-centered diversity issue from an issue that might have had a broader campus reach. She said:

It's undefined in general in terms of crisis because it's really about, is this multicultural affairs and what does that mean? That's kind of loose but, um, it's been interesting. So, if it's a Black student or if the Black student is called the 'n' word and that student is looking for some way to find a solution or feeling better, that student is placed in contact with me. On issues like the Klan coming to visit or someone who is supporting some racist kind of movement, I usually find out second-hand. Those things do tend to go through our [Diversity Institute] which is more about healing and reconciliation. That's where they generally go.

Cindy’s suggestion that she was responsible for addressing student-related diversity issues while broader issues were left to another area, interestingly staffed by White professionals, signaled her own marginalization in managing diversity efforts on her campus. Cindy was relegated to focusing on narrowly defined student diversity issues. In discussing how she felt about her level of support on her campus, Cindy said:

I guess in terms of feeling supported, I always felt like I needed to be careful. Sometimes I do that well, sometimes I don't. I have to sleep with me at night so I do try to be transparent and honest. And, I think sometimes that's uncomfortable for them. I do think our University is in a good place with situations like that, at least the upper level administration, but I think that's been a process. It has not always been like that.

Cindy’s response highlighted a rarely discussed aspect of diversity work in higher education. The scrutiny that diversity management professionals face in their positions often causes feelings of hyper-surveillance. Whether being scrutinized by the students that she served or by the University administration through her ability to mitigate and resolve student related diversity
issues, Cindy’s feelings of hyper-surveillance kept her from pushing against the status quo to the fullest extent, thereby limiting the possibility of advocating for systemic change even in her role of addressing student-related diversity issues. Cindy’s ability to operate effectively under those circumstances was nearly impossible.

Cindy also experienced the reality of racial realism. Racial realism highlights that race is an endemic and ever present part of the experience of people of color (Bell, 1992). Her acknowledgement of having to be cautious about how she served in her role highlighted the reality of experiencing racial realism. How Cindy’s role and position were/were not defined limited her ability to view her role beyond what it was structured to accomplish. University administration had intentionally framed her position so that she felt as though she needed to be cautious. Those feelings kept Cindy from being in a place where she could advance diversity without a fear of retribution. As Bell (1992) suggested, in this way, Cindy operated just as university administration envisioned. She continued to work to advance diversity but on a limited basis, knowing the boundaries that she could and could not cross. Cindy acknowledged that in instances where she crossed those boundaries she maintained a level of transparency and honesty. She used transparency and honesty to navigate conversations around diversity instead of her knowledge and education. Transparency and honesty were parts of Cindy’s set of leadership qualities but should not be the sole basis of how one navigates conversations with upper level administrators who focus on diversity (Williams, 2013).

In this context, Cindy also worked through a restrictive vs. expansive lens, a tenet of CRT (Crenshaw, 1995). The restrictive vs. expansive tenet suggests that a restrictive view would limit Cindy’s ability to engage in diversity work with faculty, staff, and students across the campus while a restrictive view would limit any possibilities of Cindy viewing her role outside of its
existing framework (Crenshaw, 1995; Clark, 2012). In this regard, Cindy operated in an expansive context as she worked with students who were experiencing challenging issues. The expansive context allowed her the ability to work toward the resolution of issues that individual students were having. While assisting students of color in navigating a potentially hostile campus environment was rewarding, it was also restrictive in that she was not consulted on larger campus-wide diversity issues, and often found out about those events second-hand. The reality of a restrictive framework also kept Cindy marginalized and relegated to only focusing on student concerns (Clark, 2012). The focus on only student concerns placed diversity as a student-centered value and not a value that impacted the entire campus including students, faculty, and staff. As Clark (2012) suggested Cindy’s knowledge and training restricted her from advocating in a substantial way for an expansion of her current role to that of working on diversity initiatives and issues on a broader level. Therefore, Cindy was unable to advance a diversity agenda to facilitate the institutional change needed on her campus (Clark, 2012).

**Diversity Crisis Moments**

The initial focus of this research study was to determine mid-level diversity management professionals’ experiences with diversity crisis moments. In seeking the experiences of the study participants, they were asked how they would define a diversity crisis moment. Cindy initially responded to the question by saying, “Well, I think there are levels of that.” Although her initial response was limited in depth, in our continued discussion Cindy provided a definition that was specific to particular instances of diversity crisis moments. She stated:

At the base level it could be that a student is parking a car and someone drives by and calls him or her the ‘n’ word. They don’t know who it was, but, you know, they feel bad. And because her campus has this racial history and because it was wrong for the person to be called that they’re looking for someone to help them…that maybe a low-lying kind of crisis… I think there can be a higher-level crisis when it is something happening upper
level or with student leaders so it becomes a more visible issue and can affect policymaking. That’s another level of a crisis. And then I think that you could have actual kind of acting out or protest on campus that goes awry. Someone expressing their views because they feel like they have free speech and it escalates to another level so you have a situation about [campus mascot] or the Klan comes to visit.

Cindy’s examples focused on student experiences related to diversity crisis moments. Her multi-leveled approach in framing potential diversity crisis moments began at the microaggressive level and ended with a protest as the top level of a diversity crisis moment. She also discussed the possibility of outside organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan, visiting her campus to protest as a diversity crisis moment. Although the examples focused solely on students, Cindy gave a glimpse into the types of potential diversity crisis moments that occurred on her campus. Cindy’s examples did not include any mention of institutional or administrative response to any of the incidents, which left questions as to how the University responded to each level of diversity crisis moment described by Cindy. It is possible that the University administration was complicit in the ambiguity of Cindy’s role in the diversity crisis moments she described, or ignorant to the role Cindy should or could play in addressing diversity crisis moments.

Similarly, Cindy discussed the reactions of students on her campus upon hearing that the Black Student Union, or BSU, a campus organization for African Americans students, was receiving funding from Student Government. Cindy stated:

So there may be students who are having an issue and race is playing a role...so there can be an argument over student government funds but why is the BSU getting all this money or why do they have this space? And so we have students now talking about that in the newspaper. That’s another level of a crisis.

Cindy explained that requests from the BSU for financial resources from student government and acquiring physical space on campus divided students along racial lines. It was apparent White students and Black students had varied opinions on whether an organization such as the Black
Student Union should be allowed to receive funds from student government. Cindy reported that an article in the newspaper about the Black Student Union requesting financial support and space was a level of crisis. Cindy’s example of the student newspaper indicated that she perceived media involvement as an indicator of a diversity crisis moment. Cindy’s response was purely from a student perspective and underscored her level of engagement with potential diversity crisis moments. Her positioning outside of a centralized diversity organizational structure limited her potential to view diversity crisis moments from a systemic or institutional viewpoint. Cindy’s response lacked a broad perspective about diversity crisis moments based on the intentional marginalization by University administration to limit her scope to only student diversity issues. These moments of crisis can involve students, but that may be only one part of an institutional response to a diversity crisis moment. Cindy’s response highlighted limitations in this area.

In subsequent conversations with Cindy, she attempted to approach her work from a proactive standpoint, however, her work with potential diversity crisis moments was more reactive. In the moments in which she was involved, she assumed the roles of a crisis manager or crisis fixer. She was the one charged with silencing the situation with the least amount of negative impact to the established culture of the University, or with the least amount of negative publicity as possible for the University. Therefore, it was conceivable that Cindy was unable to conceptualize the definition of a diversity crisis moment because she was oftentimes involved in the moment rather than being able to view diversity crisis moments through a critical lens. Cindy’s role of crisis manager or fixer may best serve the University in the moment of diversity crisis; however, it did/does not get to the heart of the complex issue that exists. Cindy’s role was largely undefined on her campus and she was often called to deal with events and issues beyond the scope of her position and its loose conceptualization by the University. Since the University
did not understand her role or the potential scope of her role, Cindy was not in a position to be forward thinking about her role in general or, specifically, her role in a diversity crisis moment. These competing interests explained Cindy’s inability to conceptualize a diversity crisis moment.

Through her role, Cindy became the victim of the University’s interest convergence. Interest convergence, a tenet of Critical Race Theory, posits that racial equality will only be achieved when it is deemed to be in the best interest of the dominant population (Bell, 1995). Using this tenet as a backdrop for Cindy’s experiences, clearly she would only be able to excel in her role as a mid-level diversity professional and her role in diversity crisis moments when the University administration believed it would serve the University’s best interest. It did not appear the University’s interests converged with Cindy’s attempt to be more proactive instead of reactive about diversity issues. An expansion of Bell’s (1992) concept of interest convergence suggested although Cindy was passionate about the work, her limited knowledge about managing diversity issues and her limited expertise in managing her role as a mid-level diversity professional served in the best interest of the University. This allowed the University administration to leverage Cindy’s role at its will. Knowing that there would be no push back, the administration determined that the direction of diversity efforts was in line with its priorities.

In determining the priorities of the university administration for the near future, Cindy discussed preparations occurring on her campus in response to the Trayvon Martin incident. Cindy focused on being prepared if students responded to the verdict. She said:

So, um, I would say that we are certainly now positioning ourselves or working on positioning ourselves to be proactive so like with the Trayvon Martin situation. If there is a situation brewing there are individuals who know we need to start having meetings and talk about what we’ve done to be prepared in case X, Y, Z happens and how do we think about all the things that could happen.
Cindy acknowledged social issues in the national spotlight have the potential to manifest themselves in some way on her campus. While Cindy focused on being proactive in addressing any incidents from an administrative standpoint, she did not discuss any opportunities for dialogue. Her viewpoint appeared reactionary rather than embracing the opportunity to provide students and the campus community with a space to discuss the incident. The preparation for any response to the Trayvon Martin incident was reflective of the CRT tenet of interest convergence. The need of the university administration to be prepared for any potential display of support or protest in response to the George Zimmerman verdict converged with the needs of the students to provide some public and visual representation of how they wanted to express their feelings about the verdict. The University operated in its best interest to avoid any negative publicity by having a plan in place to mitigate any potential unrest, or having a plan to handle any potential unrest should it occur.

A lesson to be learned from Cindy’s journey and experiences is that it is essential that mid-level diversity management professionals receive the necessary support and education. Cindy needed additional professional staff doing similar work under a centralized diversity organizational framework in order to function effectively in her role. The additional staff could have assisted her in executing her work as Cindy was overwhelmed with job responsibilities, student organization advisement, individual student consultations, student issues, and potential challenging situations. Also, the additional staff would highlight the University’s commitment to diversity by providing resources to optimize the campus’ diversity work.

Cindy was passionate and dedicated to making a difference on her campus but she lacked the formal training to navigate the campus political resistance to advancing a diversity agenda. Her ability to operate in her role effectively will remain limited until The University of Acme
makes diversity a core value and expands Cindy’s role to include working with diversity across constituents to include faculty, staff, and students.

Cindy’s story teaches us the limitations and possibilities of being a mid-level diversity management professional at an institution without a centralized diversity unit and Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). To successfully facilitate change on her campus, Cindy will need resources, support, and training.

Mike

Mike was the current Director of the Center for Multicultural Education at University of Acme. Mike was a young African-American male with a distinct southern accent. Mike presented himself as an introvert as he was relatively reserved during our interview.

We spoke in his new office that was a part of a multiyear renovation to the Center. The office lacked the character of Cindy’s office. The office space was sterile and colorless; there were no pictures or items hanging on the walls and the only visible photo was a framed one of his wife on a shelf above his desk.

Although in the role of director for one year, Mike had no formal diversity training. Prior to becoming director, Mike was an engineer. He explained his decision to leave his job as an engineer and enter higher education by saying:

Once my passion for engineering kind of fizzled out, the glitz and the glamour and the money of it will only last for so long. I kind of hit that wall where I couldn't see myself doing that for the next 30 or 40 years. And so he [current Chief Diversity Officer] and I sat and had a conversation and we talked about my interest and just knowing some things about me, he kind of steered me toward higher education.

Mike acknowledged he left the field of engineering because he was no longer interested in it. Mike also discussed being “steered” toward higher education by someone else. Mike’s phrasing of how he was introduced to higher education as a career opportunity was interesting and
signified how he viewed his journey; he maintained a high level of respect and admiration for University of Acme’s CDO, who served as his mentor and who guided him into the profession. Mike’s use of language suggested he was guided into a profession about which he knew little, and based on someone’s else’s perception of a fit, and not based in Mike’s conceptual understanding of the field and how he could contribute to the field. Mike was asked to discuss how he became director although he had no diversity background when hired for the position. He stated:

…I was working in Higher Ed and it was enjoyable but at the same time I felt underutilized. I wasn't operating at full capacity. And then this opportunity became available and you know, the opportunity to work for someone who I deeply admired and respected while at the same time doing the work that I knew I cared quite a bit about. Always wanted something where I could enjoy getting up and going to work every day and to be quite honest this is the first job I've had that I can do that consistently and be excited about the work that I'm doing. It was really, particularly my interest in the condition of African American males in Higher Ed and in society in general that kind of steered me in this direction.

Mike was the director of a multicultural center, yet he did not discuss a significant conceptualization of diversity or how anything about the work of directing the center was linked to his skills, strengths, or training. Mike focused on the relationship between himself and with whom he could work, as opposed to what or how he saw himself contributing to the larger strategic vision of the University relative to diversity. Mike discussed his interest with African American men in higher education, which ostensibly could connect to this work if not his training, but as the director of a center, his work would be much broader in scope. Mike’s response appeared to be particularly focused on his own professional happiness and the ability to work for his mentor, rather than being drawn to working as a diversity professional. Mike noted it was important for him to find a job that allowed him to operate at his full potential, however, Mike not only provided a limited explanation of how he came to his position as director, but also
he did not elaborate, even with prompting, about his long-term vision for the Center. Mike was able to discuss specific initiatives such as more scholarships for students but could not discuss any specific new diversity initiatives. Instead, Mike noted that his role as director was only a step to future aspirations. When discussing plans for future initiatives, Mike suggested that he would only be in his position three or four years. He noted, “…because you know he [Chief Diversity Officer] and I recognize that we won’t be around forever and we want to leave a legacy.”

While Mike’s enthusiasm and interest in diversity work were starting points, they are not enough to sustain viable diversity offices. While his training in community engagement and residential life may provide some transferrable skills and experiences, most likely they would not provide him with the foundational tools necessary to understand the nuances and complexity of diversity and diversity work in higher education as suggested by Williams (2013) concept of strategic diversity leadership. In viewing Mike’s view through the restrictive vs. expansive tenet of CRT as suggested by Crenshaw (1995), his limited knowledge of diversity was problematic; its lack disempowered his ability to challenge institutional power structures vertically, and particularly to engage with what might be equity functions necessary for changes within the landscape of the institution. While eager and enthused about his work, Mike’s lack of training raised questions about what it means to be prepared and qualified for such work, and called for a greater understanding of how mid-level diversity management professionals can address potential gaps in experience and knowledge.

Mike did not articulate an understanding of diverse identities, limiting his interest to only African American men. The understanding of multiple identities necessitates awareness beyond the identity with which Mike identifies most. Mike’s responses, consequently, highlight a cultural intelligence and awareness challenge as indicated in principle five of the Strategic
Diversity Leadership framework. Mike’s cultural intelligence in this field was not maximized as he lacked formal or informal training in diversity management. These limitations made it challenging to address the complexities of diversity and to be effective as a leader in his role as director of the multicultural center.

View of Diversity on Campus

When asked about how he perceived diversity on his campus Mike acknowledged the need for continued forward movement regarding diversity related issues. However, Mike was careful to place the onus of responsibility not only on the institution but also called for the diversity management professionals on his campus to advocate for support in advancing diversity work. Mike said:

There’s some work to be done there but we’re making progress. I think it’s a two way street. I think that in order to get the support that we want we have to continue to be vocal about it. We have to continue to educate our administrators of both of the benefits of supporting diversity and inclusion initiatives but also of the cost of not supporting those initiatives.

Mike argued that the key to administrative support was to make the case that diversity is a good business proposition. While the business case for diversity has been a powerful tool in corporate settings, Mike did not take into account the complexities of tightly coupled higher education systems which may move more slowly in advancing agendas than their corporate counterparts. Mike provided an extended response about how he believed university administrators have viewed diversity on his campus. Mike said:

I think within the Executive Cabinet on our campus, diversity is one of those things even those of us who are well meaning and intentioned, if we’re not careful, we can put it on the backburner. And, the push for prestige and the push for greater resources and fundraising and all of these different moving parts within a major university but we have to begin to figure out what role diversity plays in getting those things that that really have our attention. A lot of times I think one of the issues with our campus is that we’ve kind of, we’ve segmented diversity. Diversity is one thing and these other goals and objectives
are something completely different. Well, no, they’re synonymous. Diversity is a means to helping you achieve these goals.

Mike’s response provided additional insight into his belief of continuously educating senior administrators on the value of diversity. It was apparent diversity had not been prioritized as a core value as Mike was concerned about diversity being placed on the back burner. Mike’s conceptualization of the business case model allowed him to think broadly about the importance of diversity, but he did not discuss any other frameworks that may be applicable directly to higher education. His limited conceptualization of diversity in a university setting inhibited his ability to think strategically about diversity on his campus, not just about finding support for diversity initiatives but determining how these initiatives could be integrated fully into how the University does business every day.

Mike’s view of his campus’ diversity is reflective of the restrictive vs. expansive tenet of CRT. An expansive view provides a more inclusive way to conceptualizing diversity efforts from an institutional perspective, while a restrictive view limits the possibility of expanding diversity beyond boundaries determined by the dominant group (Crenshaw, 1995). Mike’s view was expansive in that he talked broadly about diversity from an institutional level. He discussed how diversity should be an important part of thinking about institutional goals and objectives. He did not limit himself to thinking only about one segment of the campus community, an important component of conceptualizing an expansive view of mid-level diversity management professionals. His response, however, was restrictive in that he was unable to discuss any specific ideas of how the university should use diversity as part of a plan to achieve its institutional goals. Therefore, Mike limited the possibility of fully operating under an expansive view that would create buy-in of different university constituents when speaking about
integrating diversity as a core university value. As suggested by Crenshaw’s (1995) concept of restrictive vs. expansive views of equality, Mike’s response demonstrated his lack of education and training in diversity as his answer lacked the depth necessary to discuss how to keeping diversity on the minds of university administration when making important decisions.

**Role in Challenging Situations**

Mike stated that he always liked “to take the role of an advisor” when asked about his role in a challenging situation. Of the participants interviewed, I concluded that Mike’s role would be the least proactive in a diversity crisis moment or challenging situation. When asked to describe his role if a situation occurred on his campus Mike responded:

> When there’s a situation going on, you know, I don’t necessarily want to be asked to come in and fix everything but to come in and from my perspective and experience provide some different options and, um, maybe some additional insight. I think that’s one of the things that I’ve learned from the Vice Chancellor and the way that he approaches things.

Mike appeared to take a very laissez-faire approach to his role in a diversity crisis or other challenging situation. Mike subscribed to being an observer rather than someone able to provide expertise and assist in mitigating a potential diversity crisis moment. His response underscored his own level of discomfort with his role as a director and the potential to be called upon to act or take a leadership role if a situation occurred. His response also demonstrated his non-confrontational approach to diversity in general.

Mike’s response provided another illustration of the role and influence the Vice Chancellor had on his decision-making abilities in relation to diversity crisis moments. He continued discussing his relationship to the Vice Chancellor and in instances involving diversity crisis moments by saying:
...if it’s related to diversity and the Chancellor is going to look to my boss and then he’s going to come to me and we’ll discuss what specific role I can play. And, he’s always going to want my role; he’s going to bring me in to address students and what we are going to do with and for students and so that’s where I come in.

Mike explained that his role was to work with students in instances of a potential diversity crisis moment. This framing of his role situated Mike in a student-oriented position of managing diversity crisis moments. The limitation placed on Mike’s role in focusing only on students inhibited Mike’s ability to work on a broader level to mitigate instances as they occurred across the University. This mode of operation is in direct opposition to Strategic Diversity Leadership principle four that highlights diversity as a part of institutional culture, not just one segment of campus.

Mike’s response can also be viewed through the expansive vs. restrictive tenet of CRT. Crenshaw (1995) suggested that an expansive view advocates for equality on a broad scale whereas a restrictive view limits how diversity is incorporated at the university level. For Mike’s role to be expansive, it would need to encompass his working with faculty, staff and students, however, Mike has not been empowered to work across groups, thereby limiting his ability to function outside the capacity in which the University has restricted him.

**Diversity Crisis Moments**

When asked to define a diversity crisis moment, Mike was slightly more direct in his response; he said, “Um, I think largely I would look at it as something that rises to the level of, um, creating or exacerbating tension or conflict amongst different groups on our campus.” Mike’s definition of a diversity crisis moment was limited. Although he suggested that a diversity crisis moment could be the result of tensions between different groups, he did not
expand on his response. When I reframed the question about diversity crisis moments, however, he did discuss potential student response to a diversity crisis moment. Mike stated:

Um, you know we always want to be proactive in those instances and to make sure that we give them, the students, an opportunity to be heard and to voice their opinion, but to do it in a respectable manner and such a format that it doesn’t become combustible.

Mike’s response conveyed the message of how students at his university, particularly students of color, should conduct themselves. From the interview and observations it was clear that Mike communicated a larger message about the behavior of students of color that had been expressed by the campus Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), who was also his supervisor and someone with whom he had a close relationship. While Mike acknowledged that the space existed for potential diversity crisis moments to occur around sensitive issues related to diversity, this message seemed problematic as it prescribed a mode of behavior for students that might be at odds with how they chose to express themselves. This tension between the perceptions of how the CDO believed students should conduct themselves and how students thought they should express themselves created a perfect environment for a potential diversity crisis moment to occur on Mike’s campus.

Mike’s response highlighted the CRT tenet of interest convergence (Bell, 1992). Both Mike and his CDO were interested in the students conducting themselves in a way that was in the best interest of the diversity office and the University, one that was non-threatening to the majority White population. Students’ concerns might be heard but only in a manner that was palatable for Whites. This interest convergence dilemma left the majority of the White administration satisfied and the students appeased. As suggested by Bell’s (1992) concept of interest convergence, Mike’s inability to recognize the value of having students express themselves in ways that were most comfortable to them highlighted the limitations in his serving
in a role that, on the surface, was framed as advocating for students against a system that was not created to serve their interests and needs; ultimately it operated in the best interests of the university.

During our talk Mike also discussed the Trayvon Martin incident. Specifically, Mike highlighted opportunities to host a campus conversation. Mike stated:

One of the things that we’re looking at with the Trayvon Martin incident, um, you know, we’re trying to be proactive about that and so we’re having a community discussion in September. You know want the students to have an opportunity to come out, learn what some experts have to say about it but also voice their opinion about it and some of their frustrations and see that not everybody sees the situation through the same lens that they see it through…

While Mike discussed taking proactive measures on his campus to allow a forum for his students to discuss an incident about which they may feel very passionately, he seemed more intent on providing a structured environment for students to express frustrations or concerns rather than a forum for real dialogue and understanding. It was commendable that he recognized the students’ need to hear differing views on the Trayvon Martin incident; however, Mike appeared more interested in having students understand opposing views rather than providing a space where students could feel supported in confronting an issue to which they felt intimately connected. Mike’s discussion of hosting a program in response to the death of Trayvon Martin highlighted the need for such a program to inform students of different perspectives on Martin’s death, issues associated with laws, and the justice system.

Mike discussed a program whereby students could voice their opinions “in a respectable manner.” This is an example of Mike’s restrictive approach rather than an expansive approach. Through the CRT tenet of a restrictive vs. expansive philosophy, Mike’s view of how the
students should conduct themselves restricted the possibility of real dialogue that may lead to positive institutional change, whether on campus or in the surrounding community.

Mike’s portrait provides learning opportunities for mid-level diversity management professionals. Although Mike did not have any formal training in diversity work, at times he was able to articulate a message about the value and importance of diversity. Mike’s lack of education and training, however, limited his ability to provide tangible ideas of how to advance a diversity agenda (Williams, 2013). While Mike provided an expansive view of diversity, he was unable to provide specific examples of how to expand diversity on his campus (Crenshaw, 1995). Mike felt supported by his CDO which is important in creating a team to do diversity work.

Beyond education and training, Mike’s limited views on student response and his “role as an advisor” during challenging situations are cautionary notes for mid-level diversity management professionals (Williams, 2013). Student response to challenging situations is difficult to predict and limiting how students are allowed to respond to challenging incidents may cause more frustration than allowing students to voice their concerns. If Mike had taken a more active role during challenging situations, opportunities would have provided more depth to his knowledge of how diversity was prioritized on his campus (Clark, 2012; Williams, 2013).

Phillip

Phillip was Acme University’s Director of the Multicultural Center. Like Mike, Phillip was an African American male in his mid-to-late thirties. The only participant in this study with a terminal degree, Phillip’s dissertation focused on the multicultural competencies of student affairs professionals. Unlike Mike or Cindy, Philip is not soft spoken and expressed frustration during our discussion. His office moved from another part of campus into the Student Union as a part of Acme’s major renovation of the Union. Similar to Mike, Phillip’s office was at the end
of a long hall. Phillip’s office was best described as ‘organized chaos’ with many piles of paper all over his desk, the floor, by the door, however, Phillip was able to make room for two chairs for us to sit and talk.

Phillip provided a different perspective than Cindy and Mike. Phillip was a graduate assistant in a multicultural center, which provided some background in diversity work. He also worked as a coordinator for multicultural affairs and had worked as a director in multicultural affairs at a law school prior to joining the staff at Acme University. Phillip described his first experience working in a diversity office:

I ended up working and had a graduate assistantship in the Multicultural Center at [Midwest University]. It was the first year that the Multicultural Center was created because we had all these different ethnic student services offices and they had just come together that fall when I was starting. So, I worked as a graduate assistant in the Office of African American Student Services for two years while I was a graduate student. [I] really enjoyed that.

Phillip’s work in the Multicultural Center mirrored one pathway of how many diversity professionals begin their careers. The foundation of his career was his specific work in African American Student Services for two years as graduate student. Phillip’s story was unique among these participants as he worked in a center that was representative of both international and domestic ethnic minority students. Phillip described his journey to a coordinator position at the Multicultural Center and the type of work in which he was engaged. He stated:

I got hired at [Midwest University] in the Multicultural Center as the coordinator of new diversity initiatives which is a position they no longer have but it was a brand new position…[I] worked with emerging student populations so, students that had not yet hit a critical mass…I worked with interfaith programs. I worked with Muslim students, Middle Eastern region students. I worked with multicultural, well, they call them third cultural kids who are students who grew up outside the United States, but had US citizenship. I worked with multiracial students. It was just pretty exciting to kind of be in that space.
Prior to becoming the director at Acme University Phillip served as the director of Multicultural Affairs at a private law school in the Midwest. He described his experience:

So, all the experience I had up to that point, you know, was incorporated into this position. I was out recruiting law students, sitting on the admissions committee, um, you know, counseling, uh, academically at-risk students, proctoring exams, well, I had to hire the proctors and proctor some of the law school exams. You know, it was pretty, pretty intense in terms of, not, I don’t want to say intense but it was a lot of duties for that position at the law school because I was also working with the student organizations putting together community service opportunities, working with the alumni.

It was this experience that led Phillip in 2008 to his current position as Director of the Multicultural Center at Acme University. Currently, Phillip is responsible for working with a diverse student population and diversity programming.

Phillip’s level of cultural intelligence was higher than either Cindy or Mike and aligned with Strategic Diversity Leadership principle five; this principle suggests diversity management professionals should lead with an awareness of different identities (Williams, 2013). Phillip also was aware of underrepresented populations and was interested in incorporating diverse students into the multicultural center at his university. This awareness was evidenced in his discussion of intentionally changing the signage at the multicultural center. Phillip described his rational in changing the signage by saying, “…so we could be explicit in attracting all cultures because as a Multicultural Center you want multiple cultures. You don't want to be a monocultural center unless that is what you are. But that's not what we are. And, that wasn't what we tried to be.”

Phillip’s outreach to diverse cultures provided an expansive view of how mid-level diversity management professionals who direct multicultural centers can view their work. Instead of thinking about multicultural centers as spaces for only domestic ethnic minority students, Phillip’s view of multicultural centers included outreach to international students and was expansive rather than a traditional restrictive view. Phillip’s view of integrating international
students versus only domestic ethnic minority students was an example of the CRT tenet expansive vs. restrictive, as diversity is framed as more than a single identity feature (Crenshaw, 1995). An expansive view allowed Phillip to reach more students through the center’s outreach efforts.

**View of Diversity**

Phillip provided a mixed response when discussing how he viewed diversity on his campus. While his university was mandated to enhance diversity through a court case some years ago, Phillip believed that the satisfaction of the agreement changed how the university embraced diversity. Phillip said:

"Um, because the institution understands its history and some of the challenges because [Acme University] for a long time was governed by a court case that required it to do certain things around diversity. And it was only in 2008 when the ruling was lifted and [Acme University] was no longer was required to do some of those things. And unfortunately, it looked like at that same time right when that case was lifted that's when they changed the standards so it's curious at best.

Phillip suggested the University embraced diversity only to satisfy the court agreement, not because there was a true commitment by University administration to sustain diversity efforts related to admissions and creating a critical mass of students of color at the university. Phillip seemed skeptical about the change in standards, noting possibly the timing was not coincidental. This implied that the University made a critical decision about diversity efforts with which Phillip did not agree. The limitations of his role did not provide him with the opportunity to engage outside of his work in the Center.

Phillip’s perception of diversity at Acme University aligned the CRT tenet interest convergence. Interest convergence occurs when equality is achieved only when it serves the best interest of the dominant group (Bell, 1992). Phillip’s interest in having diversity situated as a true
priority of the university did not converge with his description of the University administration’s commitment to diversity. While the University operated under the court case, there was a displayed commitment to diversity and the administration conveyed a commitment to diversity which converged with the need to satisfy the terms of the court case. When the terms of the court case were satisfied, the University no longer displayed a commitment to diversity, and thus the lack of promoting diversity converged with the priorities of the University administration.

As a follow-up question, I asked Phillip if his job responsibilities required any programs or initiatives. This led to a discussion about the limitations placed on him in terms of the role of the Center on campus. Phillip noted:

It's interesting because my vision is broad but I've been told on a number of occasions that I can only do what is described or outlined in the goals of the Center. So, I can only do programming. I can't say that the work we're doing is related to retention. I can't say that. I can't say that the work we're doing is improving campus climate or anything like that. All I can do is programs because if I do more than that then it's moving outside of our scope.

Phillip’s response demonstrated the CRT tenet expansive vs. restrictive view (Crenshaw, 1995; Clark, 2012). Although Phillip had an expansive view of how he wanted the Center to engage students and connect to larger university goals such as retention and campus climate, Phillip was restricted to programs primarily for students. As suggested by Clark (2012) an expansive view of diversity at Acme University would have allowed Phillip to assess how the work of the Center impacted retention and campus climate. Phillip was frustrated as he was unable to focus on broader issues or to connect the work of the Center to broader University priorities.

**Role in Challenging Situations**

Phillip believed that his being contacted to share his expertise and experience in handling challenging situations depended upon the incident. Phillip noted, “Um, obviously they would call
me and I would have to share my experience. I mean it really depends on the incident. I mean I think they do keep me in the loop.” It was evident that Phillip was looped into past incidents and would be included in discussions should future incidents occur. He said:

I would get the email or phone call and say, 'Hey, this is happening. What can we do? What are your thoughts?’ They would ask me my opinion and try to keep me in the loop. They would call me before they would call the [Associate] Vice Provost in my opinion.

When asked why he thought he would be contacted before the Associate Vice Provost, Phillip responded, “Because I've built those relationships with Student Affairs. Student Affairs primarily takes the lead on incidents and things like that.” Although Phillip was seen as a resource on diversity issues, his ability to provide insight was based on professional relationships rather than as a function of the job. Contacting Phillip before contacting the Associate Vice Provost supported the idea that the diversity professionals on his campus were not the primary point of contact for student diversity related crisis issues. This limited the ability to be fully engaged in the full scope of diversity work on his campus.

Phillip’s role in challenging situations was both expansive and restrictive (Crenshaw, 1995; Clark, 2012). His role was expansive as he was included in discussions about potential challenging situations. His role was restrictive, however, as the ability to be included in discussions about potential challenging situations was based on professional relationships he had made rather than because the duties were part of his position. If Phillip left his role as Director of the Multicultural Center, it is questionable whether his successor would be engaged in future conversations as his ability to be involved was based on his working relationships. An expansive view would allow any person serving in the position to be involved in deciding next steps in challenging situations around diversity.
Defining Diversity Crisis Moments

Phillip had not thought about a definition of a diversity crisis moment. When asked to define diversity crisis moment he responded, “I mean that is a really good question. Um, and I definitely think that is something that should be outlined and defined. You know, it can take all kinds of forms.” Phillip provided an example of a diversity crisis moment but did not provide an example from his campus. Rather, he focused on what he described as a diversity crisis moment at his alma mater. Phillip stated:

I so happened to be in [Midwest State]…I was passing through [Midwest City] [and] stopped at [Midwest State University]. This was the day after someone had painted ‘Long live Zimmerman’ on the Black Cultural Center. So, students organized a sit-in in the Student Union, the [Midwest] Union. Um, and they had a peaceful sit-in. You know faculty, student leaders, would all get up take turns talking and addressing the issues and taking the University to task…

Phillip’s example of a diversity crisis moment at his alma mater centered on an incident that occurred after George Zimmerman, a Latino, was accused of murdering Trayvon Martin, an unarmed African American teenager, in Sanford, Florida. The murder of Trayvon Martin, subsequent trial, and non-guilty verdict garnered national attention while deeply dividing opinions of guilt or innocence along racial lines. Before the case went to trial, one of the most visible spaces for African American students at Phillip’s alma mater, and one of the most renowned Cultural Centers in the nation, was defaced when ‘Long live Zimmerman’ was spray-painted on the side of the building. Phillip used his example and the peaceful sit-in at a University Board of Trustees meeting as potential diversity crisis moments. Potentially negative publicity showcasing the University as insensitive to the concerns of students did not converge with the University administration’s desires to be viewed as responsive and proactive. In this example, an analysis of the University administration through the lens of interest convergence
revealed that student concerns were addressed only after the potential for negative publicity did not serve the best interest of the University. The response by University administration to hear student concerns and show good faith in addressing these concerns was congruent with the principle of interest convergence, that equality will only become a reality when it serves the interests of the dominant group (Bell, 1992, 1995). The student protest was only successful if University administration thought it quelled student unrest and any negative publicity.

Phillip’s example also highlighted racial realism. Racial realism posits that racism is an everyday part of society (Bell, 1995). It is an endemic part of how we navigate daily interactions in and around institutional systems such as college campuses (Bell, 1995). The defacing of the Black Cultural Center with ‘Long live Zimmerman’ demonstrated that racism was/is still present in society and at higher education institutions. Phillip might have used the example to deflect from a diversity crisis moment on his campus, however, the reality of the existence of racist acts on a Cultural Center cannot be considered coincidental. The Cultural Center was a physical representation of providing resources and support to a critical mass of African Americans attending the university. It was established to educate all students about African American culture and more specifically to provide a place where African Americans shared their experiences of occupying spaces intended for the dominant group (Patton, 2006). The phrase ‘Long live Zimmerman’ was intended to preserve the notion of the dominant culture and to suggest that the dominant culture did not intend to serve the interests of people of color.

It was evident from Phillip’s passionate account of the incident that he found the vandalism offensive. He seemed impressed by the mobilization of students, faculty, and staff to protest the defacing of the Black Cultural Center. After discussing the diversity crisis moment at his alma
matter at length, Phillip expanded his initial definition of a diversity crisis moment. He framed his definition from an institutional perspective that focused on students:

…I think first of all students need to mobilize. There needs to be some sense of student organization. Administration needs to be working behind the scenes and coming up with a statement…You have to have a statement decrying the incident from the highest administration and then you also have to have a plan for addressing it with the campus community and working to make sure stuff like that doesn't happen…I guess the fifth would be a commitment to working against those forms of oppression and oppression in any form on a campus. I think those steps are essential. And, if you do that then the community knows that you're responsive, the students know you're responsive.

The lack of a clearly defined role for mid-level diversity management professionals or lack of protocol in determining university response was consistent in each of the interviews. Of the three participants interviewed, Phillip’s definition of a diversity crisis moment from an institutional perspective was perhaps the closest to an actual formulation of a model for addressing diversity crisis moments. He outlined a step-by-step process of how a diversity crisis moment could be initiated by students and an overview of best practices for a response by university administration. He appeared more knowledgeable than the other participants and I found his response to align with the broader critique that the unit of analysis for diversity crisis moments stays at the individual level instead of the institutional level.

Phillip’s step-by-step process was a response to the CRT tenet racial realism. By understanding that diversity crisis moments will occur as part of a culture where racism is systemic and part of how people of color navigate their experiences, Phillip framed his response from an institutional perspective. The response to the outward display of racism that the students experienced was an understanding of the permanence of racial realism.

Phillip’s response also contained aspects of interest convergence. Phillip intentionally outlined steps from the University’s perspective of how the University could best position itself
in responding to a diversity crisis moment; in this example, the University was positioned favorably in responding to diversity crisis moments. Like Cindy, Phillip assumed the role of crisis manager. Although he did not indicate that he was a part of University administration, he appeared more interested in making sure that the University could use the steps to diffuse the issue rather than outlining a plan to resolve the issue. Phillip’s response outlined the limitations of mid-level diversity management professionals’ ability to work through diversity crisis moments. No literature or learning has provided Phillip with a lens through which to conceptualize his work, nor has his position within the institution provided him with the resources and experiences to conceptualize his work differently. Phillip is in a personal diversity crisis rather than just being unable to conceptualize or manage a diversity crisis moment.

Phillip’s portrait provided us with a snapshot of a mid-level diversity management professional who possessed the education and tangible skills to direct a multicultural center. His terminal degree and his previous professional experiences in diversity management gave him a unique perspective on the state of diversity at Acme University. Phillip’s ability to navigate the campus was evidenced by his work with student affairs colleagues on potentially challenging situations. Phillip also possessed a broad conceptualization of diversity that included international and underrepresented student populations, and White students taking advantage of the resources provided by the Multicultural Center. While Phillip’s education, work experience, and skills seemed an ideal pathway to diversity work, his portrait was also a lesson in the importance of support from a CDO. Phillip received little support from his CDO and blamed his CDO for budget cuts that restricted his ability to create programs and outreach for the Multicultural Center. Although Phillip was frustrated with what he perceived as a lack of commitment to diversity by his CDO and the University administration, he was passionate about
diversity work and continued his work in spite of the challenges he faced. Phillip needs to continue building relationships across campus to enrich his professional experience, or explore other opportunities where he can work in an environment that views diversity as a critical component in advancing the university’s goals.

Chaunda

I am the Director for Multicultural Affairs and the Assistant to the Vice Provost for Equity, Diversity & Community Outreach at Acme State University and A & M, known to faculty, staff, students, and the community as ASU. I am a 37 year old African-American female in the process of obtaining my terminal degree in Higher Education from ASU in its College of Human Sciences and Education. Unlike other participants my split role at ASU means that I have two offices; one is located at the Student Union, and closely resembles Phillip’s office, and a second office is housed in Academic Affairs for my role as Assistant to the Vice-Provost, and is a space which is not frequented by students on a day-to-day basis.

My journey to diversity work started in 2000 at Acme State University and A & M. I did not have any formal diversity training when I was hired as a coordinator in the Office of Multicultural Affairs. My training came from my experience as a student at a historically Black college, as a student worker in the Office of Student Affairs, and as a student leader. On my path to diversity work, I did a brief stint as a biology and environmental science teacher at a local high school. Although I came from a long line of educators, I did not enjoy teaching, but I enjoyed being on a college campus so I applied when a position became available. I believed I could connect with students and create excellent, sustainable programs. That led to promotional opportunities from coordinator to assistant director to director and my current dual roles as
Director of Multicultural Affairs and Assistant to the Vice Provost for Equity, Diversity &
Community Outreach.

Initially, the expectation was to produce great programs. I considered myself an event
manager with a diversity focus, rather than a diversity professional. With a change in office
leadership, I began to see my role differently. As I recognized myself as more than an event
manager, I expanded my own conceptualizations of what diversity could and should look like on
my campus, visions which came through work experiences rather through a formal training
pathway.

After I was promoted to director, I was challenged by the Chief Diversity Officer at the
time, who was new in the position, to think differently about how we framed our work with
underrepresented students and the larger campus community. For me, that meant transforming
the office from an African American student dominated space to a space where students with
multiple identities could find resources, programming, and support. As I thought differently
about the work, a shift occurred in the office. One result of this shift was that the professional
staff and graduate assistant hires also were of different backgrounds. Where I originally saw only
African American students in the office, I started to see students from other ethnicities and
backgrounds. I distinctly remember the words of an African American colleague who often
referred to me in a joking manner as the ‘Dean of Black Affairs’. That was not my professional
title, but that moniker was how he, and possibly others, viewed my office. His remarks fueled my
desire for the office to be seen more than just a “Black space.”

It was also during this time I began to realize my unique position in what our former Vice
Provost and Chief Diversity Officer explained as ‘sitting at the apex’. I was positioned to provide
a space to meet ethnic minority and underrepresented students where they were in their
academic, leadership, and social needs, while helping to bring the University along where it needed to be to be inclusive and welcoming. My role was complex, but I understood my responsibility to effect change on campus.

**View of Diversity**

In 1954, Acme State University enrolled its first African American student. Just fifty days later that first African American student was removed from campus by a court order. It was not until 2011, fifty-eight years later, that A.P. Tureaud, Jr. was awarded an honorary doctorate from the university that refused to allow him to pursue his undergraduate education. ASU has come a long way since 1954, and has celebrated many successes including the most diverse incoming freshmen class in ASUs history, the opening of two new cultural and gender specific centers, and a myriad of educational and experiential learning opportunities for students, faculty, and staff. While we have made great strides in diversifying our student population challenges remain in diversifying our administrative ranks. Most of the senior administrators at ASU are White men. With the departure of the ACUs’ CDO to another institution, there are no women of color in senior leadership positions. African American and Latino faculty comprise only 3.8 percent and 2.6 percent respectively of total tenure-track faculty on campus. While the diversity of our student population continues to increase, the diversity of our faculty is stagnant.

Diversity is listed as one of ASUs goals for the University’s strategic plan. Presently, the University is undergoing a plan to organize the ASU system, and ASUs’ main campus and satellite campuses under one larger organizational umbrella. The “one ASU” framework has an extensive vetting process with a task force, subcommittee meetings, and public meetings, yet diversity was not included as one of the core specific areas or subareas addressed in the initial steps of reorganization. It is still undetermined if diversity will be discussed or how diversity will
be implemented as part of the larger “one ASU” plan scheduled for implementation in two years. The “one ASU” plan may be the first of many indicators in determining how diversity will be situated as a system priority in years to come.

The experiences of students of color and other underrepresented populations inside the classroom is an area that still needs to be fully addressed at ASU. Most students, including most students of color, have an experience that promotes intellectual growth, provides support in their chosen discipline, and allows for networking and relationship building among peers. However, there have been instances where faculty members have made disparaging remarks about the aptitude of students of color while in the classroom. In other instances faculty members have voiced their personal beliefs, under the guise of academic freedom, to condemn students for their sexual orientation, gender, religion, and values. Some students believe that they received grades on exams, projects, or papers that were lower than their White peers with no full justification. Some international students have been encouraged to adopt an American or Western first name to increase their prospects of obtaining a job after graduation. A student of color can still be the ‘only’ or one of very few students of color in a classroom. This is not to say that these instances happen all the time for there are students of color whose experiences at ASU are very different from the examples of classroom challenges mentioned, yet there are students who have had these experiences. Even one student having a challenging situation like the ones described is one too many. This is an area where ASU needs substantial change.

While there are students at ASU who are engaged in activities outside of the classroom many students, including students of color, are apathetic or uninvolved. When I first arrived on campus students were very active in organizations, assuring that concerns were addressed, and participating in committees. More recently, students are much less active, not as involved, and
much less inclined to bring issues to the forefront. While some organizations like the Hispanic Student Cultural Society, Spectrum, and Black Student Union are thriving, other groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Native American Student Association, the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) and the nine historically African American fraternities and sororities have low membership numbers or have gone inactive. New groups like the Asian American Ambassadors attempt to connect groups of students to university staff and resources that have been able to sustain themselves without university support.

Faculty and staff from underrepresented populations also are challenged with finding their own support networks. ASU’s Black Faculty and Staff Caucus, once a thriving organization, is struggling to maintain its relevance as both membership and participation are down. The networking group for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, or LGBTQ faculty and staff, QBiEquity, has not gained its footing as many faculty and staff are concerned with being out on campus. No groups for Asian or Asian American or Latino faculty and staff exist. There is no group or mechanism to bring all of these constituents together. Support for faculty and staff from underrepresented populations exists essentially informally and individual’s make connections rather than having an established group through which to network and build community.

Cultural programming is executed primarily from the Office of Equity, Diversity & Community Outreach (EDCO). The student programming areas within the unit, Office of Multicultural Affairs, African American Cultural Center and Women’s Center, are responsible for the majority of diversity focused programming on campus. There have been collaborations among the EDCO units and other departments and colleges to provide spaces for workshops,
trainings, and professional development opportunities around diversity issues. While these collaborations have been well received, much more is needed to reach a critical mass of faculty, staff, and students to continue making ASU an inclusive learning environment.

My view of diversity on my campus is a campus that is largely fractured. While there have been great successes in diversifying the campus community, there are some real challenges. To successfully create an inclusive campus environment, diversity must become a shared responsibility. If diversity is truly a university priority it will take more than just the efforts of the centralized diversity office to accomplish this goal. It will take other departments, deans, administrators, faculty, staff, and students working together to situate diversity as a core university value.

**Role in Challenging Situations**

As part of the research study, I reflected upon my role in challenging situations. My role is to make an assessment on the situation and determine next steps. I have been involved in individual student issues, issues involving groups, and larger campus issues with each situation requiring a different response. Whether the Vice Provost learns of a situation first or if I learn of a situation first, I am involved on an intimate level in working to find a resolution to the issue. In instances that involve students, part of my role is to facilitate communication with the students about an issue. In instances where situations are diversity focused, I am often called to serve as a resource. My student affairs colleagues have asked me many times to serve as a resource or to provide context for an issue that they did not understand. This provided opportunities for collaboration which slowly increases an understanding and contextualization of diversity issues.

In challenging situations I become a crisis manager. Solving or providing a viable option to the issue or situation becomes the immediate priority. All other tasks, programs, and duties
needed for daily operation become secondary. When faced with a challenging situation my primary goal is always to find out as much information from as many reliable sources as possible, devise a plan, communicate often, and maintain a level of transparency. Reliable sources can provide information or resources to work through the challenging situation. Devising a plan is important in responding to or preempting a challenging situation; all challenging situations will be different and devising a plan and troubleshooting are key skills for moving quickly and effectively to a reasonable resolution. Communication is a key to assuring that constituents and the university community are updated and informed about any changes or resolution to the challenging situation. And finally, maintaining a level of transparency shows that all are working in good faith to resolve the issues in the best interest of all involved parties.

I faced a challenging situation when University administration wanted to explore options for expanding parking on campus. Ordinarily, expanding parking on campus would be a welcome initiative; however, the potential parking expansion project meant the demolition of the African American Cultural Center (AACC) to make way for a new parking garage. The AACC was located in the middle of campus and occupied a prime piece of real estate. University administration wanted the land to build the parking garage and students did not want to have their building demolished. The students feared that if they agreed to tearing down the AACC that the university would not hold up its end of the bargain and that the building would not be replaced. Although the AACC stayed on the deferred maintenance list, the carpet was in need of replacing, the heating and cooling system did not work, and the exterior needed repairing; still it was home to many African American students. Without a substantial fundraising effort, the prospects of building a new AACC were slim. Students were very concerned when they heard of the proposed demolition plan. An option was devised for a mixed-use facility with an AACC on
the first floor and the parking garage on the remaining floors. The AACC would be paid for by the bonds secured by the University to build the parking garage. Students had to agree to the new proposed plan for it to work. If students did not agree, the AACC would remain as a building in disrepair that no longer could accommodate demand for use. If the students agreed, a new and expanded AACC would be built as part of the parking garage. The final decision rested with the students but University administration wanted, and in some ways needed, the students to say ‘yes’ to the proposed plan. Three challenges came with the plan: 1) making sure the students understood that a new AACC was in their best interest, 2) convincing students that, although the University had sometimes fallen short in its promise for a college experience that valued their experiences, it was going to live up to its end of the bargain, and 3) rebuilding the AACC.

The process to determine if a new AACC would become a reality was a lengthy one. Students were inundated with rumors that the AACC would not be rebuilt despite assurances that it would. This information fueled a level of distrust between the students and University administration. Under the direction of the Vice Provost and in collaboration with the Women’s Center, we planned a series of town hall meetings where students discussed their concerns, we developed a communication plan to communicate updates, and finally we convened two committees that worked with the architects so that interested parties had input into the design of both centers. It took a year to determine whether the Centers would stay in their original condition or become part of a mixed-use facility. In the end, the students and the committees decided to move forward with the expansion project. In 2013, the new African American Cultural Center and Women’s Center opened on their original footprints but part of a larger structure.
Throughout the process I was charged with being the lead staff person to communicate with the students and the core committee for the AACC. After an early communications blunder by the Women’s Center director, the Vice Provost asked that all communications for both the AACC and the Women’s Center happen simultaneously. I remained the point person for the AACC but also became the lead communications person for the Women’s Center. I had additional responsibilities as I not only worked to garner support for a new AACC but also for a new Women’s Center. My work with students, senior university administrators, architects, contractors, and community constituents enabled us to move the expansion project forward. This challenging situation resulted in two new Centers but more importantly taught me lessons about how to manage challenging situations.

Diversity Crisis Moments

It was a brisk fall morning, the kind of morning that marked the beginning of the fall season in south Louisiana. The mornings in South Louisiana are usually cool and the afternoons give way to the last few rays of warmth before the true winter season begins, or at least winter by South Louisiana standards. Just like every morning I began the usual 20-minute commute to my office at the large, research-intensive, predominately White campus. On this particular morning, my cell phone rang. Such early morning phone calls were unusual so immediately I knew something of which I needed to be aware was happening. It was a co-worker with important news.

“Hello”

“Good morning...How are you?”

“Good. What’s going on?”
“Well... [Jason] and a group of students are going to protest in front of the Chancellor’s Office in a few minutes. They are meeting at the Cultural Center and walking over. They want him to come outside and listen to their demands.”

“[Jason]? What specific demands?”

“They want the confederate flag in the school colors banned from campus.”

“Happy Monday. I’ll be there in 20 minutes. Cancel today’s interview.”

The previous vignette is my recollection of the beginning of my experience with a diversity crisis moment in 2005. The gathering outside of the Chancellor’s office began with a series of student protests to have the confederate battle flag in school colors banned from campus. The confederate battle flag was most prevalent at home football games and African American students were outraged that this unofficial university flag had become a symbol of school pride for those attending the games. The central diversity office and the Chief Diversity Officer were charged with “handling” the situation. I was faced with coming up with an institutional response to the student protests. I had no prior experience or knowledge with which to frame my response, yet I operated in the role of as a crisis manager under the direction of the Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). The University leaned on the CDO to calm the situation. In the beginning, we attempted to operate in the best interests of the students and the University. We prepped the students on what to say and what to demand before the meetings with University administrators. This approach was increasingly difficult to manage as the protests intensified. We eventually lost the ability to influence the student protestors. The CDO was framed as a traitor who worked in the best interests of the University’s White administration. The Chancellor, whose diversity politics many thought lacked any commitment, was framed as the voice of reason to mediate between the CDO and a group of unruly African American students. I was
stuck in the middle, feeling overwhelmed and without direction or support. The institution expected a swift resolution to the protests and the students expected me to stand with them. In some ways, the two sides felt that I did not do enough. I did not stop the protests and I did not put my job on the line for what the students believed was right. My involvement from the ground level of this diversity crisis moment gave me a unique institutional perspective. I was no different than the mid-level diversity management professionals in this study as my primary responsibility was to make sure the University’s interests were maintained.

That singular moment challenged me to approach my work differently. I recognized the desires of the University to shift the focus from primarily Black and White students to include students from other represented populations in our programs and services. The interest of University administration and my desire to expand diversity on our campus aligned. This involved streamlining programs and resources as well as shifting responsibilities of professional staff. Whereas the majority of our focus was on serving African American students, our new efforts allowed us to use our small staff and limited resources to reach out and cultivate other underrepresented student populations including Latino/a students and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer/Questioning, or LGBTQ students. I was careful with my programming decisions as I did not want African American students to think that they had lost programs or services as a result of this change. I moved forward with changes I knew were needed to better serve diverse students. If the University had not been interested in shifting its focus, I would have been unable to conceptualize my work differently than in previous years. Within this framework, the diversity crisis moments of this research study stood as more defining moments for me than for my peers.
I define a diversity crisis moment as a singular event or series of events that occurs on a campus which brings attention to the needs, concerns, and interests of underrepresented populations. These events often become high-profile, garnering campus, local, and sometimes national attention, and require the university to demonstrate a good-faith effort to resolve the issue or concern. The response to diversity crisis moments can require additional university resources from areas including the Centralized Diversity Office, University Relations, and President’s or Chancellor’s Office. These university resources work collaboratively with university administration to resolve the issues and concerns of the diversity crisis moment.

The CRT tenets, racial realism, Whiteness as property, and interest convergence served as intersections within my story (Bell, 1992, 1995; Harris, 1995). Racial realism provided the backdrop for the event when the students saw their school colors in the traditional confederate battle flag and realized that racism was a prevalent part of their everyday lived experience. The students’ reactions to the injustice were subsequent protests on home football games, which aligned with the racial realist philosophy of using social platforms to reject racism. The tailgaters and football fans flying the traditional confederate battle flag in school colors was representative of a Whiteness as property approach to race; the flag was a symbol of University pride and a symbol of Southern heritage dating back to Civil War, when African Americans were considered second class citizens; it supported a nostalgia for preserving the beliefs and values associated with the dominant group.

My role in persuading the protesters not to march and to “handle” the situation on behalf of the University was an example of interest convergence. The interests of the students were only supported or thwarted in ways that best served the interests of the University. As suggested by Bell’s (1995) concept of interest convergence, while I set out to operate in the best interests of
the student protesters and the University, it became clear that my role served the best interests of the University as I was expected to curtail the plans of the student protesters. Even though the students protested, the University still exercised its authority to determine the date, time, place, manner, and route of the protest. The University dictated the public expression of the student protesters frustration with its own interests. Although I was unaware at the time, racial realism, interest convergence, and Whiteness as property were prominent in my experience with this ASU diversity crisis moment.

**Discussion**

There are challenges regarding the training and qualifications of the professionals in diversity positions. This may explain why participants were not able to recognize or define diversity crisis moments in substantive ways. Consequently, I argue if these professionals lack specific training and qualifications, the difficulty of navigating the institutional and systemic challenges is exacerbated when attempting to effect change on their campuses.

The data from the participants, including my own auto-ethnographic context, suggests the roles of mid-level diversity management professionals are largely undefined and are constructed based on the needs of the institution. Whereas there is a growing and foundational base in the roles of Chief Diversity Officers (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013), the pathway and portfolio for the mid-level professional is nebulous. Not only are there no specific competencies and standards set by the profession, the interviews in this study reveal a broad spectrum of conceptualizations about the responsibilities at this level that make it difficult to understand the roles and responsibilities for these professionals generally, but especially in moments of crisis related to diversity. Although the participants had difficulty framing diversity crisis moments from a theoretical perspective, they were able to discuss their roles in relation to past or future
events. The ability to discuss diversity crisis moments or other challenging situations is reflective of the “in the moment” crisis manager role that mid-level diversity management professionals often play on their campuses, a role which is distinct from how trained equity, diversity, and outreach professionals are educated to respond.

Filling these positions with professionals who lack adequate training to fulfill their roles creates limitations. In some instances, having professionals who lack substantive training and preparation may be just what university senior level administrators are seeking, that is professionals who lack the skills needed to push against the status quo. It is possible that universities did not recognize that having professionals in these positions is critical to advancing a diversity agenda. As discussed in chapter 1, universities were initially created for affluent White men and men trained for ministry work and were unprepared for people of color and other underrepresented populations (Thelin, 2004). Thus diversity management professionals need to be adequately prepared to work on campuses that were not created for the student populations they serve.

**Diversity Crisis Moments**

While I expected I would learn a lot about how crisis moments were defined in my initial conceptualizations for this dissertation research, “watershed” moments of diversity crisis were not commonly articulated or described by participants. I described what I saw as a significant event at my own institution, yet, when interviewing participants for this study and directly asking participants to define a diversity crisis moment, there was no clear consensus about the term’s meaning. Consequently, this unexpected finding led to further questions about why these professionals did not appear to have a language that conceptualized diversity crisis.
Diversity crisis moments are not new to the landscape of higher education. Their existence has been recognized since the student protests in the 1960s served as the catalyst for the emergence of cultural studies programs; literature is particularly attuned to this time period as the benchmark for student activism around diversity issues. However, a cogent definition of what constitutes a diversity crisis moment has yet to be generated through scholarship or practice. Some professionals use crisis as an umbrella term which can encompass diversity crises while other professionals associate a more nuanced understanding using the term diversity crisis moments (Williams, 2013). While higher education professionals seek information and resources on how to best prevent or manage crisis moments in general, there appears to be a lack of understanding by these professionals on how to best address diversity crisis moments as they occur. Therefore, in this study, I sought to discover if mid-level diversity management professionals experienced diversity crisis moments on their campuses and if so, how did they conceptualize a diversity crisis moment.

While the original framing of the study followed my intent, participants revealed far more complex definitions. These mid-level diversity management professionals did not frame diversity crises as discrete “moments.” Rather, they framed diversity crisis moments as a manifestation of university administration consistently failing to fully integrate diversity as a core university value. As a result, the mid-level diversity management professionals in this study were limited in their conceptualization and definition of a diversity crisis moment. Diversity crisis moments were viewed as important in that they were situations that needed to be resolved but not as events that stood alone. How the participants viewed their roles and responsibilities in relation to advancing a diversity agenda was found to be more important than the diversity crisis moments. The majority of the research participants viewed their role as confined to their center and student
interactions. To this end, the participants demonstrated limited systemic thinking about their work. Rather, they focused on their immediate condition from a practitioner-based approach when addressing diversity issues on their campuses which limited opportunities to advocate institutional change. This approach highlighted an “in the moment” way of conceptualizing diversity work that accounted for the inability to see beyond their everyday experiences to a broader understanding of diversity from an institutional perspective. This “in the moment” approach in managing diversity on their campuses did not facilitate engagement with peers in similar positions, connections to the literature, or other related experiences. The crises participants’ experienced are only a small snapshot of the challenges they faced in their roles.

The lack of a cogent definition of a diversity crisis moment among the professionals reflected the inconsistency in definitions found in literature. The participants had no succinct definition of a diversity crisis moment which limited their ability to conceptualize and provide solutions for something that has not been adequately defined. The inability to define a diversity crisis moment is representative of the restrictive vs. expansive tenet of CRT. Crenshaw (1998) suggested that a restrictive framework supports the dominant group in maintaining different power structures based on race as a primary factor while the expansive framework supports a power structure that is based on everyone being afforded access to benefits previously reserved for Whites. Through this lens mid-level diversity management professionals’ undefined roles have been restricted to a narrow view of diversity crisis moments where an expansive view would allow for an all-encompassing perspective on diversity which would include diversity crisis moments. The mid-level diversity management professionals in this study have operated through a restrictive perspective by focusing on broadly defined roles with initiatives primarily
focused at the student level whereas an expansive perspective would include opportunities for initiatives to promote change at the institutional level.

**Diversity Crisis Moments in Relation to National Conversations**

Some of the nation’s most pressing social issues have become prominently discussed on college campuses. The war in Vietnam and the Civil Rights Movement are two examples of social issues that compelled students to protest in support of or to protest against social issues on their college campuses. More recently, response to the arrest and trial of six African American teenagers, known as the Jena 6, convicted of assaulting a White teenager at Jena High School, sparked student rallies and participation in the march of Jena, Louisiana. Another contemporary incident was the Trayvon Martin shooting which each of the participants discussed the impact of the death of Trayvon Martin. These incidents not only sparked national conversations but also required university administrators to think critically about how these issues impacted their students and how students would respond in support of or protest against these issues.

While Mike discussed taking proactive measures on his campus to allow a forum for his students to discuss an incident about which they felt very passionately, he seemed more intent on providing a structured environment for students to express frustrations or concerns than a forum for real dialogue and understanding. While he recognized students’ need to hear differing views on the Trayvon Martin incident, Mike appeared more interested in having students understand opposing views than providing a space where students could feel supported in confronting an issue to which they felt intimately connected.

Cindy acknowledged that social issues in the national spotlight have the potential to manifest themselves on her campus. While Cindy focused on proactively t addressing incidents from an administrative standpoint, she, too, did not discuss any opportunities for dialogue. Her
viewpoint appeared reactionary rather than embracing the opportunity to provide students and the campus community with a space to discuss the incident.

The participants’ discussion of the murder of Trayvon Martin is an example of racial realism. The national conversation on race and the justice system sits at the core of the argument of racial realism, which suggests race is endemic to society. The perception that George Zimmerman was not initially charged with murder and his subsequent acquittal perpetuates the notion that a Latino man, portrayed as White in the national media, would not receive jail time for killing an unarmed African American teenager, and highlighted that there is a different value placed on the lives of African Americans versus Whites. The reality is that, in this real-life scenario, the justice system functioned as it was designed, to maintain the status quo of racial inequality. The study participants recognized the potential for their campuses to become microcosms of larger national conversations about race. The realization that racism not only sparked the national conversation, but was also part of the everyday lived experiences of people of color on their campus communities, signified that race was still an issue in society and on their campuses. The potential for campuses to become sites of resistance where students of color could express their outrage and frustrations about the acquittal of George Zimmerman was very real in the minds of the participants. Even though the participants wanted to take precautionary measures to ensure that any potential situation was diffused before it gained momentum, a racial realist philosophy suggests that these instances of resistance need to occur so that those who wanted to express their feelings about the injustice of the outcome could be heard.

The limitations of mid-level diversity management professionals not adequately equipped to handle these potential diversity crisis moments might result in interest convergence. As the role of mid-level diversity management professionals is largely undefined, these professionals
serve as crisis managers and diffusers who are charged with keeping order by not allowing or mitigating potential protests. Mike’s suggestion of providing a forum where conversation could happen in a respectful manner and Cindy’s precautionary measures in reaction to the Zimmerman verdict signified these two mid-level diversity management professionals worked to ensure that maintaining social order was a priority and in the best interest of the university. While the university situated the mid-level diversity management professionals with largely undefined roles, they found themselves overwhelmed in managing these incidents as they had no preparation for how to respond if a diversity crisis moment occurred; thus these mid-level diversity management professionals were limited in the type of responses they could provide.

**Diversity Crisis Moments Revisited**

A review of the literature did not provide a definition of a diversity crisis moment and the interview participants were unable provide a clear definition of a diversity crisis moment. When examined together, however, the participant responses did provide a working definition of a diversity crisis moment. Cindy described different levels of incidents involving students as diversity crisis moments. She also noted the influence of media on a diversity crisis moment. Phillip described a diversity crisis moment as a multi-step approach by university administration to the mobilization of students around a diversity issues. Mike described a diversity crisis moment as an incident that created tension among different groups on campus. I define a diversity crisis moment as a singular event or series of events that occurs on a campus which brings attention to the needs, concerns, and interests of underrepresented populations. Instead of generating a definition of a diversity crisis moment, all of the participants used examples of events that occurred on their campus or other campuses. The participants’ inability to conceptualize a diversity crisis moment deflected from diversity crisis moments to other
challenges that they experienced. Those deflections were efforts to reframe the conversation based on their experience, knowledge level, and comfort level. This illustrated that neither the person in the role as the mid-level diversity management professional nor the university understood the utility of the position in an era where students are becoming more diverse; in many ways the university still operates in an era of exclusionary practices.

In instances where the participants did discuss potential diversity crisis moments, racial realism, Whiteness as property, and interest convergence highlighted the interests of University administration to maintain existing social and political frameworks. Their responses, however, revealed a larger diversity crisis much different than what was expected. Further exploration of these diversity crises may enhance understanding about the institutional challenges these mid-level diversity management professionals face in their roles. Understanding these challenges may provide greater context to understanding the complexity and difficulty of conceptualizing a diversity crisis moment. The remaining chapters will explore these new diversity crises as discussed by this study’s participants in an effort to understand that diversity crisis moments are just one piece in understanding the larger diversity crises that the participants face.
CHAPTER SIX: FINDINGS: THE PLIGHT OF DIVERSITY ON CAMPUS

As highlighted in Chapter 5, the plight of the mid-level diversity management professionals centered on the lack of preparation for the roles which they have been asked to fulfill, the ambiguity of their roles in diversity crisis moments, and the lack of definition of their roles. Despite their best efforts to enhance diversity on their campuses via co-curricular opportunities, many mid-level diversity management professionals, and particularly the ones who participated in this research study, find themselves in a somewhat peculiar situation. They work at PWIs, which are organized in systems created decades ago for White, heterosexual Christian males. Diversity in race, gender, and sexual orientation was not a factor then. Therefore, mid-level diversity management professionals work to ensure student success while showcasing the university’s actual or perceived commitment to diversity. Their role is challenging and complex. Navigating these often competing interests can be difficult for the most savvy and seasoned diversity professional. However, it often can be more difficult for those not adequately trained for their positions or for those lacking support to navigate their roles successfully. Even those who find themselves navigating their roles successfully often find challenges with the constant tension between the diversity management professional and the university. Questions they might ponder include: Have I become comfortable with the way things are? Do I come across as the diversity police? Am I advocating in the best interests of the campus or my own best interests? Do I have to change my message in order to be heard?

The continued quest to answer these questions can be a tumultuous experience even likened to the landfall of a hurricane. When a hurricane comes ashore, the impact is felt miles away. It can bring torrential rains and damaging winds which can cause flooding, power outages, property damage, and in some instances the potential for loss of life. These threats produce
anxiety as the storm’s unknowns are frightening (e.g., directional path, duration, and potential destruction). Similarly, mid-level diversity professionals in a director’s role experience threats to their campuses and campus cultures. Moreover, the ways in which these professionals navigate diversity issues depends on their resources and whether or not they are equipped to deal with the potential impact and long-term implications of “a storm.” The path of devastation left by diversity professionals unable to advance a diversity agenda on their respective campuses can have a rippling effect on their campus for years.

This chapter explores the complex nature of the mid-level diversity professionals and how they navigate their relationship to their institution and how they view diversity on their campuses. I will also discuss the relationship to spaces and particular landmarks of interest. The organizational structure as well as their relationships with their Chief Diversity Office or other senior administrator will be explored. Finally, I will discuss how diversity may be conceptualized differently from an equity point of view rather than a singularly focused diversity point of view.

**Diversity on Campus from Their View**

Study participants had varying opinions on the state of their campus climate relative to diversity. The opinions ranged from indifferent to receptive of diversity. In response to the question about the diversity climate on their campuses, Mike said, “You know, I think we're in a good position.” Phillip’s opinion was less enthusiastic by saying, “Um, in terms of campus climate, it's indifferent to diversity. You know, it's here but nobody wants to discuss it.” Cindy related her response in to a diversity climate study that was recently completed by a student research team. She said:
…basically what was unveiled in their report, in the students’ report, was that our campus needed to dedicate more space and more staff to multicultural work on our campus. Um, the areas that seem to need the most work were areas related to race specifically African American related issues and sexuality…

The participants’ responses provided a glimpse into how they viewed diversity on their campuses. While Mike believed the climate relative to diversity on his campus was going in the right direction, Phillip had a much different view. The tone of their responses and body language when responding to this question confirmed what they said. Mike’s answer was upbeat and positive like his response, while Phillip appeared disgusted with the state of indifference he experienced on his campus; his body language suggested an almost defeated outlook on diversity. Cindy appeared optimistic in her response to the question. She was quite proud that her students completed a campus climate study that included a review of diversity efforts at other institutions across the region. At the beginning of her response she stated, “I can speak, I feel, very confidently to that because we just had a student group lead a campus climate study and I advise the student group who did this.” Cindy’s former uneasiness when answering some of the initial questions disappeared when I asked about the climate towards diversity and diversity related issues on her campus. She appeared much more comfortable discussing current trends and issues rather than long-term diversity efforts. This response supports the importance of leading with cultural intelligence as outlined in the Strategic Diversity Leadership principle 5 discussed in Chapter 4. Williams (2013) suggested that cultural intelligence and awareness of different identities is important to implementing a successful diversity agenda. In this regard, Cindy was taking the first steps in determining the needs of her campus community.

The study participants experienced the CRT tenet of restrictive view vs. expansive view. Crenshaw (1995) argued that the restrictive view outlines equality as a process where the
expansive view outlines equality as an outcome. The participants wanted to provide programs and services that enhanced the campus but, the very nature of how their positions were defined restricted their ability to lead substantial change on their campuses. The result was that they only could see and react to current issues as they arise. This view limited the participants’ opportunities to institute a real culture shift on their campuses that would have substantial impact on how diversity was viewed and valued.

I found conflicting responses examining Mike’s reflections about the campus climate toward diversity. Mike initially described his campus as being in a “good position” in regards to the diversity climate. He went on to say, “I think [on] our campus climate, by and large people are pretty receptive and welcoming of individuals from different backgrounds. [However,] with pretty much any Predominately White Institution (PWI) there's gonna be tension and conflict…” Mike suggested every PWI faces tension and conflict around diversity issues. While a history of exclusion and systemic injustices at PWIs may give credence to Mike’s assertion, his blanket statement was an attempt to deflect attention from any problems that might have existed on his campus and to generalize within a larger context. Later, however, after reflecting on organizational priorities related to diversity, Mike had a more candid and different opinion. Mike stated, “Yeah, I think that goes back kind of the campus climate thing. Our campus I believe is much more, um, friendly when we’re talking about access and opportunity from the perspective of socioeconomics rather than of ethnicity.” Mike’s belief that his campus was more receptive to issues of access and socioeconomics rather than race provided context for how he viewed the direction of diversity work on his campus. As a first-generation college student Mike might identify more personally with students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Without any training or formal experience in diversity work, Mike appeared forced to focus his efforts on
what was most familiar to him. Part of a diversity framework is working with students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, however, it is only one small portion of a larger conceptualization of how diversity is defined and operationalized. Mike’s limitation in conceptualizing an inclusive framework for working with diverse students was troubling as diversity efforts through his work may be in danger of being minimalized, since Mike did not appear to have a clear picture of the direction of diversity efforts on his campus. He had, however, bought into the broader campus vision of becoming a Top 50 institution. He expressed his take on the larger vision by saying:

I think it just, whatever we do moving forward we need to tie it to the University's vision of becoming a top 50 public institution by 2021. So that people understand we're not just talking diversity and inclusion for the sake of having a bunch of people who look different or have different backgrounds you know being educated together. No, in order to reach that goal of being a top 50 public institution we need high performing individuals with diverse backgrounds and skills working in an environment where they welcomed, valued and engaged so that they could achieve their full potential cause that's how we get there. So, when we do that when we become a top 50 public everybody wins.

Mike’s response was indicative of someone who was on message with a broader vision. The confidence and succinctness of his response indicated that Mike had bought into the vision of becoming a Top 50 institution. What was problematic was Mike’s inability to take the broader message of becoming a Top 50 institution and actualize how his office could assist in that effort. Mike’s “whatever we do moving forward” is a caveat to his response indicating that he had not yet figured how diversity could assist in the broader goal of university administration to becoming a Top 50 institution. Mike’s lack of training in the field limited him from thinking independently and creatively about how the university’s diversity efforts could assist in reaching the end goal.

Each of the participants viewed students as critical pieces of the diversity work on their campus. The perspectives on how students engage and view the work varied but the ideas of how
students value diversity emerged as a common theme across the participant responses. Phillip said, “Uh, you know, students of color don't necessarily want to be affiliated with it [diversity]. They don't want to rock the boat. They don't want to address real diversity issues.” Phillip’s response provided insight into what may be occurring on his campus. Phillip’s statement that students of color are not interested in being connected to diversity stems from his belief “that majority of the people that attend our programming and come to the Multicultural Center are actually White students.” Additionally, Phillip’s assertion that students don’t engage in real diversity issues suggests that there may be some level of students addressing diversity but that not at the level that Phillip believed would make a difference on his campus. Phillip believed that his institution’s status as a large commuter campus was one of the barriers to student engagement. When asked the follow-up question about diverse students being engaged, Phillip responded:

I’m used to students being engaged on campus but because historically there hasn't been a lot of on campus housing and this is a challenge for students of color, the housing gets taken up so quickly, um, and typically students of color don't make decisions about when to attend the institution until a little bit later so, by the time they decide, there is really no on-campus housing available.

Phillip valued the student experience related to diversity. His reflection on diversity crisis moments at other institutions mentioned in the interview suggested that Phillip was supportive of students’ active engagement in transforming their campus. Phillip attributed the lack of student engagement to the limited number of students of color that live on campus. Phillip suggested that students are more connected and engaged when they reside on campus. In his opinion, the failure to have a critical mass of students of color being engaged was a missed opportunity for students of color to see the limitations and injustices that exist on their campus.
Mike’s perspective on how students view diversity on their campus focused on majority populations or White students. Mike critiqued diversity work by saying:

‘One of the problems that, one of the things that we missed out on talking about diversity and inclusion is we’ve not necessarily presented it in a way so that majority populations can see what's in it for them outside of doing the right thing…I think business term is WIIFM, What's In It For Me.’

Mike’s critique of diversity work is important to note. The focus on creating spaces for students of color and other represented groups can be alienating to White students. It is problematic, however, to suggest that the focus of diversity efforts should be on White students who benefit from their position of dominance because they are White. Mike appeared not to understand diversity from a theoretical perspective but instead, relied on a business related concept for diversity. Similarly, Mike’s thoughts on how to provide opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue fell short of providing a clear picture of his long-term planning. He said:

…but moving forward we would like to be engaged in a more meaningful level and to figure out how can we not necessarily set out to change people’s behavior cause I think we set ourselves up for failure when do that but how can we equip people with knowledge that influences the decisions that they make on a daily basis?

Mike’s statement was conflicting. He did not understand that equipping people with knowledge to influence their decision-making does change their behavior. This response was similar to Mike’s response to taking on the role of an advisor if a diversity crisis moment were to occur on his campus. Mike was hesitant to operate in a role that would force him to take a critical position on diversity-related issues on his campus, thus leaving his campus devoid of a decision maker at the mid-management level that focused on diversity-related issues.

Cindy attempted to explain a balanced view of diversity on her campus. She stated:

I mean we have 17% African American students so there is certainly something going on that works in terms of African American students coming to our campus but it's apparent something is not happening here when we get them here.
The percentage of African American students at Cindy’s university serves as a point of pride for her institution but what is disappointing is that Cindy could not explain from an expert lens the reasons for the disconnect experienced between African American students and their sense of belonging at the university. When asked a follow-up question about how African American students experienced the campus she provided this extended response:

...the students explained their experience this way and these were all Black students. As freshmen they came here very bright-eyed, excited, energetic; they felt like this was the best campus in the world. They're met at orientation by the Chancellor, the Provost, um, diverse student leaders who are orientation leaders. And, they felt like it was a very pleasurable experience even when they were, you know, one of very few Black students in that circle. And then as sophomores they began to experience a little bit of removal from this delusion is what they called it, that, you know, life was great and White privilege didn't exist. And by junior status...they were becoming very jaded about their experience and by senior status they were just ready to get out. Ready to go. They had formed some good connections to students of color and White students but they did not have this sense of belonging. They felt very marginalized and so from their sophomore year to senior year the marginalization they felt just increased over time...

Initially, Cindy focused her response on the number of African American students enrolled on her campus but went on to describe challenges with other student populations. Cindy commented, “…but definitely our students tell us that we don't have enough resources, that our spaces are not safe um are not actually created to be safe for individuals who identify as LGBTQ.” What is interesting about Cindy’s response is that, while the students were able to articulate their needs and the lack of resources, at no point did Cindy take ownership to confirm or refute the students’ claims. It is unclear if her neutral position was based on her unwillingness to expend her own human and political capital on diversity related issues, or if her own limited knowledge about diversity prohibited her from being able to champion and take ownership of diversity issues at the level required. Cindy’s responses were similar to Mike’s responses in that
both position themselves as messengers rather than advocates actively engaged in the diversity work on their individual campuses.

**Chaunda’s Campus Diversity Perspective**

In my eight years as a mid-level diversity professional in the position of Director of Multicultural Affairs, I understand the current state of diversity on campus. We have received national awards for our centralized diversity efforts. For the second straight year, we boasted the highest enrollment of African American and Latino students enrolled. We opened two new and expanded Centers, the African American Cultural Center and Women’s Center. Our LGBTQ and Latino student communities are thriving. Yet, even with these successes, the university is in an interesting conundrum and faces challenges. For example, we remain stagnant in the number of African American tenure-track faculty. Our staff-focused affinity groups struggle for members or are nonexistent. There are no African American women in senior leadership positions. Our students of color are relatively apathetic. We have an Interim Chief Diversity Officer who is from outside the field. Some of our students continue to take courses in disciplines where they are the only person that looks like them in the classroom. In my time at the university, I have seen the campus transform from a predominately African American and White campus to a growing diverse community, however, we still have much work to accomplish.

The conundrum ASU faces today is twofold. We have students of color whose experiences are much different than their predecessors who attended the university 15-20 years ago. We have gained momentum in recruiting diverse students, but we are in a holding pattern. Although we have increased programs and services for our diverse student populations to enhance their student experience, we have done more with less financial support from the university. We have sustained successive budget rescissions. In the past five years, the diversity
unit’s total operating budget was cut by over $200,000. Signature diversity programs have been consolidated and some have been eliminated. With the departure of the longest standing Chief Diversity Officer, there is no clear vision for the future of diversity on our campus. The Interim Chief Diversity Officer, although a person of color, has a background in athletics, and is managing the role part-time. The Interim Chief Diversity Officer has not articulated a vision of the future of the university’s diversity agenda. We find ourselves at a critical juncture.

I believe that the unit charged with leading diversity efforts has continued to thrive in the face of these challenges. I have lived and breathed this work for thirteen years at this institution. I acknowledge that I bring personal biases to this perspective. It is very personal for me, yet, I know that even with these biases we continue to approach our work with innovative approaches and passion. But, if we do not continue with our progress we will be in danger of losing the momentum for which we have worked so hard.

**Participant Candidness**

I find it important to note the level of candidness of the participants in this research study. Mike and Cindy did not immediately answer questions at different points during their interviews. In fact, both Mike and Cindy used stall tactics to gather more information to determine how best to answer the question. When I asked a follow-up question to determine if any controversial diversity issues occurred on Cindy’s campus, Cindy hesitated for a moment and asked, “Are you using pseudonyms for this?” When I assured her I was using pseudonyms for the research study, she responded, “Great. There are certainly.” She then went on to discuss specific examples. I experienced the same hesitancy with Mike when he answered the question about the level of support received from the university. He attempted to deflect the question by saying, “Don’t you be asking me no loaded questions,” followed by a nervous laugh. The exchange then proceeded:
Chaunda: I don’t think that’s a loaded question. Do you feel supported?

Mike: I think from, I think like with any institution, the [The University of Acme] is not any different. We still have some pretty significant progress to be made.

Chaunda: Are you giving me a loaded answer?

Mike: What? (laugh) No, but I think looking at where the institution was when I was a student and where we are now, I think we’ve come a long way. We’ve made some real progress. We’ve done some intentional things to diversify, diversify our student population.

Only after reframing Mike’s indication of a loaded question did I receive an answer and it still appeared that the answer was scripted and on message.

In communication with Cindy and Mike, the more in-depth questions regarding incidents or level of support were the questions that prompted their responses. In contrast, Phillip appeared very candid in his responses during the interview. However, when I sent transcripts of the interview for him to review, Phillip requested that I send it to his personal e-mail address instead of his university e-mail address. Phillip’s hesitancy about having the transcript sent to his university e-mail address suggested fear of possible retribution for any negative comments made during the interview, should someone else view the transcript.

Chaunda’s Candidness

I understand respondents’ hesitancy in answering to some of the interview questions. I also felt hesitant in sharing my thoughts and reflections as a participant in this study. Would my responses reflect poorly on the university? How candid could I be without appearing negative or influenced by stressful situations? Would anyone with whom I work read my dissertation and know the people and situations that are discussed? What potential backlash, if any, exists for “telling it like it is?” These are just some of the questions with which I grappled as I worked through my own fears. I could not and do not recall a time that I had to ask such in-depth
questions since I began my university or my diversity work. Many of us who work in diversity meet at conferences, engage in conversation, and share best practices. We feel a sense of connectedness because of the shared experience of doing this work. We rarely, however, are asked to share the good and the bad we experience when doing this work. I peeled back the layers through this process, and I felt/feel vulnerable to scrutiny and critique and I agree with how Cindy, Mike, and Phillip assessed each interview—this process felt therapeutic. The ability to include my own thoughts and experiences in this research study has provided an opportunity for reflection on how I have thought about diversity and how I will continue to think about diversity.

Office Spaces

Cultural Centers serve as a welcoming environment for diverse students seeking social support at the university. In addition, Cultural Centers are part of a university’s symbolic institutional commitment to diverse populations while also serving as active recruitment and retention tools for the university (Patton, 2006). These Centers can be a “safe haven and retreat from the perceived unfriendliness of the campus environment” (Patton, 2006, p. 628-629). Cultural Centers can also serve as places for programming that is in line with students’ cultural values and traditions, places to meet other diverse students, and places that provide access to staff who are interested in their academic and social development (Patton, 2006).

Interviews with the participants were conducted in their offices on their respective campuses. The interview locations provided an opportunity to create a level of comfort for the interview participants in a space that was familiar to them. This also provided an opportunity to see their office locations and gain insight into how their offices functioned on campus. Each Center was located in the Student Union or Student Center, which serves as a central hub for
students. The spaces, their functions, and their relationship to students and other departments are explored in this section.

**Multicultural Center at University of Acme**

The Center for Multicultural and Diversity Education at University of Acme is located on the fourth floor of the University Student Center. As stated on the Center’s website, its mission is to provide “academic, cultural and social programs intended to promote inclusiveness, foster achievement and assist in the development and advancement of a diverse student body.” The staff members seek to accomplish this mission through academic and culturally based programs and services. Reporting to the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, the Center’s staff includes three professional staff, an administrative assistant and a graduate assistant. The Center is a newly renovated space with a main lounge area, smaller seating area, small conference room, large conference room, computer lab, and offices for professional staff. One unique feature of the Center is a coffee bar in the middle of the Center where students study (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. University of Acme’s Cultural Center Coffee Bar](image)
The Center underwent a name change two years ago from the Multicultural Center to its current name. When asked the reason for the name change, Mike replied:

I think the name change was largely tied to the shift in the focus of the Center. So, it’s not just a gathering place for underrepresented students. I mean I can just be frank, Black students. On our campus, and that’s really what it has been tied to. They come here, play video games, they hang out, you know, there’d be other type of social gatherings and that’s good they need some of those components but like I said the academic performance measurements just weren’t there. And in coming in and having what was the Multicultural Center go from Student Affairs to Diversity Affairs the Vice Chancellor for Diversity felt like a name change was needed to signal that there was a different direction taking place so that’s when it became the Center for Multicultural and Diversity Education…

When asked how students reacted to the name change and shift in focus of the Center, Mike discussed the backlash from some African American students. Mike said,

So, the upperclassmen who were used to the way things were felt like something was taken away from them… several of those students that kind of just fell off and you know stopped coming around and you know some of them even went so far as to keep to try to keep other students from coming in here.

Part of the backlash stemmed from the Center serving as a home for the Latino Affairs office, which also reports to the Vice Chancellor for Diversity. Mike described some of the African American students’ reaction to the changes in the office:

Particularly within the African American student population on our campus there was some real backlash because with the Office of Latino Academic Advancement and Community Relations having their office here in the Center now the traffic of Latino students through this space and who are engaged in our programs and utilizing our resources that has increased much more. So they [African American students] felt like not only is this gathering place being taken away but now in its transition it’s becoming this Latino Student Center.
Mike noting the challenges experienced by having the Latino Student Affairs office (Figure 2) housed within the Center is an interesting point. The purpose of a Multicultural Center or culturally based center by design is to be a welcoming place for students of diverse backgrounds to gather and engage one another. However, it appears that the opposite happened at University of Acme as some students thought that their space had been taken away from them and given to another underrepresented student population. The perceptions of loss of space created tensions between populations of students who otherwise should have found a commonality or, at the very least, not felt animosity toward one another. During my tour of the space, the Center space felt very open and inviting but there was a distinct difference in where the Office of Latin Affairs began and where the Multicultural Center staff offices were located. In some ways, it felt like two different Centers with shared common spaces instead of a true Multicultural Center where people moved and interacted within the same space.

Mike’s pride in the financial investment in the Center’s physical changes was clear as he mentioned several times on the tour without being prompted how much items in the Center cost. This seemed an effort to showcase to me how much the University was committed to diversity.
in a tangible way. Unless Mike and his staff can resolve the students feeling that the space is no longer a place for them, the renovated space with its prime location and expensive furnishings will fail to serve the critical mass of students for which it was intended. Mike and his staff need to think more strategically about students’ perceptions of the Center so that it becomes a welcoming, shared place for all students.

**Multicultural Center at The University of Acme**

It is deceiving to denote this section as the Multicultural Center at The University of Acme, as the university does not actually have a Multicultural Center on its campus. Physically housed under Student Affairs, the staff dedicated to multicultural affairs consists of an Associate Dean whose responsibilities are split between volunteer services and multicultural affairs, although most of the workload and time is dedicated to multicultural affairs. Despite not having a dedicated Center on campus, The University of Acme has celebrated significant historical milestones with the recent celebration of 50 years of integration, the election of the first African American woman student body president, the election of an African American homecoming queen, and, for the first time, garnering funding dedicated to a graduate assistant for LGBTQ advocacy. With these many accomplishments Cindy was quick to point out the unique positioning of diversity on her campus. She stated, “I think we’re creative about how we do diversity. I’ve heard comments like ‘what everybody else does for diversity on their campus is not how we need to do on our campus.’”

The Office of the Associate Dean of Students for Volunteer and Multicultural Affairs’ serves as the space where students gather and go for resources. When asked what spaces existed for students of color on campus, Cindy responded:
Well, you’re sitting in one. (laughs) I just shared this morning that my office is like a triage Center. I have students coming in for healing, student coming in to talk about something fabulous, but it is like a triage Center where the door is opening and closing, opening and closing all day long….and as you can see it is not very large. It's kind of like a party in here sometimes everybody wants to crowd in. I've probably had you know ten students in here. I've had instances where they just form a meeting and there's people sitting on the floor cause they just want to you know chill even though I have work to do; they’re having a meeting.

Figure 3. The University of Acme’s Associate Deans’ Office

Cindy’s interview for this research study was conducted in her office (Figure 3), indeed a small yet cozy and inviting space. There was enough room for a Cindy’s desk and chair as well one guest chair. A number of pictures and artifacts hung on the wall next to the bookcase stacked with papers and binders. Cindy even created a ‘thank you note’ wall out of the blinds in her office. It was apparent that she had made the most out of the small space to make it inviting not only for herself as her own professional space but also for the students who visit her office. When asked about the prospect of having a Multicultural Center on her campus, Cindy discussed the idea of having a Multicultural Center and the politics of establishing a Center on her campus.
We talked quite a bit about having a Multicultural Center and a diversity office. There’s been talk probably for the past five or six years. And, that definitely has been something that people have been very hesitant to move forward on. And, it is really through the work of the students and something that the students want that we’re now kind of taking those next steps. Um, I don’t think that there is a failure to understand that we need work when it comes to diversity… I do think that the leaders understand that some of the individuals who we work with or who are alumni have different views and so there is a balancing act that individuals have to kind of make sure they play with all constituents. And I think they’re very careful with their balancing act. And, so, diversity work, I would just say tends to move slowly on our campus.

Despite the limitations about Cindy’s professional qualifications for her current role, it is evident that she is thoughtful about the importance of having a Multicultural Center on her campus. It appeared the Cindy was keenly aware of the politics associated with establishing a Multicultural Center on her campus. In this regard, Cindy did possess a degree of political savvy that is important in diversity work. To further understand the implications of not having a Multicultural Center and her office essentially functioning in that role, I asked about how she functioned without a Multicultural Center on her campus. Cindy gave an extended response:

To not have a Multicultural Center…. It feels like you’re doing this never ending work to make sure that the people on campus especially the students, for me, who need to know that there’s a multicultural resource available, is available. Since you don’t have that Center, you’re just trying to figure out and make sure, how do you make sure that there is a service here? Um, that’s how it feels like it’s just never ending work and there’s just no end to it. My hope is that a Center would end that. My reality is that a Center would not end that work but it would at least structurally say to individuals that our institution embraces diversity in a formal way. And, I think that would give us a more centralized way to showcase services and hopefully that would lead to increased retention and persistence and decrease feelings of marginalization.

Cindy’s hope for a Multicultural Center is commendable. It appeared, however, she lacked necessary support from university administration to create a Multicultural Center. The possibility had been discussed for the past few years and, in continued conversation with Cindy, she noted she thought the University was closer than ever to identifying space for a Center. She attributed this progress to the work of a core group of students who worked on the climate study and
researched other institutions. Cindy’s university may not mimic the ways in which diversity efforts are operationalized at other institutions, but it is clear the conversations are happening. While waiting to see if a Multicultural Center will materialize in the next few years, Cindy’s office will remain the place that students of color see as their home away from home.

**Multicultural Center at Acme University**

The Multicultural Center at Acme University originally was established as the Center for Diversity and Race Relations after a series of fraternity parties reflected poorly on the fraternity and the University’s commitment to diversity. The national media attention garnered after the incidents prompted University administration to open the Center. Today the Multicultural Center at Acme University is centrally located on the first floor of the University’s Student Center. The Center reports to the Associate Vice Provost for Diversity and Multicultural Affairs. The Center’s mission is to “applaud differences by enhancing cultural experiences through outreach, service, and scholarship. By promoting diversity, the Center seeks to create and sustain a supportive environment for [Acme University] students, faculty, staff, administration, and community.” The staff of the Center consists of a director, an office assistant, and two graduate assistants. The Center has a conference room, office space, computer lab (Figure 4), and a library. Phillip remarked that the “space is so much more useful” than the space the Multicultural Center occupied before moving to the Student Center. In discussing some of the features located in the space, Phillip said:

> You got a conference room, reading room out front with TV and you know diverse magazines and resources for students to take advantage of. And then we have a nine-station computer lab. Honestly, I think that nine station computer lab has been probably been the biggest draw for us…the fact that we're in the Student Center it helps us.
The Center is located right off the food court. There are multiple windows so that students can look in and see what is going on in the Center. The Center has a vibrant feel with lots of light throughout the Center.
Similar to Mike’s office at The University of Acme, Phillip’s office was also a newly renovated space. Phillip believed being located in the Student Center helped increase the visibility of his office. When asked about the location of the Center, Phillip said:

If you come in we are the first office you see if you come in from the stadium side the first office you see is the Multicultural Center. So, I won't complain about that. We get a lot of people that just walk in and say 'Hey. Can you tell where this is or that is?' You know cause we are the first office that's here. So, 'what is this place?' So, it gives it an entree into talking about the work that we do.

Phillip thought that the Center’s central location provided opportunities to engage students that the Center would otherwise not have the opportunity to engage. When discussing programming for the Center, Phillip had an interesting perspective on the students who attended the Center’s programs. Phillip said:

I would say that majority of the people that attend our programming and come to the Multicultural Center are actually White students. And, this is a big change uh, when I first got here there was a stigma obviously attached to diversity and the Multicultural Center that hey, you know, it's just a space for Black students, we can't really go there. You know, some of the Black students didn't necessarily come here either but um, you know, we've grown a lot.

Phillip discussed an assumption that plagues many Multicultural Centers—not every student of color will use the Multicultural Center. Just as any other service or campus resource, students may choose not to take advantage of the resources. Similar to Mike’s office at The University of Acme, the expansion of the office to include other cultures may have alienated Black students to the point that the majority of students attending the programs in the Multicultural Center are White students. Ideally, the Multicultural Center should be a space where all students, including White students, can learn about other cultures. However, if the students who benefit the most from the Multicultural Center are White students, then, by default, it becomes one of many spaces on campus occupied by Whiteness and leaves one less space for students of color who do
want to utilize the Multicultural Center on a campus where most spaces are occupied by White students. Phillip’s and Mike’s experiences with student populations’ utilization of their Multicultural Centers are additional illustrations of CRT’s expansive view vs. restrictive view. In both instances, the Centers, which have historically been spaces for African American students, are being seen as spaces for other groups of students. The expansive view highlights the integration into the Centers of different groups as a positive step in eradicating past exclusionary practices of not having spaces for diverse students to feel welcome and accepted. The restrictive view would suggest that the spaces, which primarily served African American students, are being taken away instead of creating additional spaces and are restricting all underrepresented student populations to one space. In the instance of the Multicultural Center on Phillip’s campus, the expansive view of providing diverse learning opportunities resulted in African American students shying away from the Multicultural Center altogether.

**Multicultural Affairs at Acme State University**

The Office of Multicultural Affairs at Acme State University is a multi-faceted student oriented department whose mission is to “cultivate an atmosphere that embraces individual difference, sustains inclusion, and cultivates a campus atmosphere that is free from bias.” In addition to its mission, the primary goal of the office is to provide academic, leadership, and social growth opportunities for students of color and other underrepresented student populations. Located on the third floor of the Student Union, the office was renovated four years ago as part of the Student Union construction project and includes office space, conference room, tutorial space, reception area, and workspace for student committees. The African American Cultural Center, which reports to the Office of Multicultural Affairs, is a newly expanded 5,000 square foot facility located less than one block away from the Student Union. The staff consists of a
director, assistant director, coordinator for cross-cultural affairs, coordinator for African American Student Affairs, and three graduate assistants, including a graduate assistant for LGBTQ student affairs. The Office of Multicultural Affairs reports to the Vice Provost for Equity, Diversity & Community Outreach. In many ways the office is the most visible of all the units under the campus centralized diversity office.

As the director of Multicultural Affairs, I had the opportunity to be involved in conceptualizing the layouts for both the office and the African American Cultural Center. What were once dark and antiquated spaces are now spaces that have been physically transformed into vibrant, cutting-edge spaces to encourage student and campus community use. The programs sponsored by our office are intentionally diverse to respond to our growing student communities. No longer is the Office of Multicultural Affairs a space for African American students. It is not uncommon to see Black students, Latino students, LGBTQ students and White students occupying the office at the same time. With our shift to making the office a more culturally diverse space, we did not experience the backlash from African American students that Mike experienced at The University of Acme, or the loss of the primary stakeholders like Phillip did at Acme University. This may be due in part to having an African American Cultural Center on our campus, but this may also be because I framed the outreach to other underrepresented student populations as adding to our collective experiences, not taking programs and services away from one particular group. Students are always welcome in the office and are encouraged to support the events outside of the group in which they identify.

As the director, I am keenly aware of the successes and challenges of our office staff. We excel in programming, student development, and outreach. Our financial constraints and small staff challenge us. We have students who can be apathetic to diversity issues unless they
are directly affected. We have departments with which our collaborations highlight a different operating philosophy. Since the departure of our Vice Provost and Chief Diversity Officer, we have combated rumors of being structurally aligned under Student Affairs. Despite these challenges, our balanced approach of providing students with academic, leadership, and social opportunities, providing culturally relevant programs, and strategically seeking out positive collaborative opportunities will continue to serve as the basis for the work that we do every day.

Other Spaces on Campus

In addition to the Multicultural Affairs Offices or Centers, there are other spaces of particular significance to diversity efforts on the campuses that I visited as a part of the research study. These spaces serve as reminders of the complex relationship between the institutions and their constituents. The spaces are just a snapshot of many other spaces that exist at institutions around the country that serve as sometimes painful reminders of the tension that can exist in advancing diversity on a campus. In some instances, the campus administration “got it right” and in other instances the campus administration missed an opportunity to “do the right thing.” Two specific spaces are the Civil Rights Monument and the former spaces for traditionally African American sorority houses at The University of Acme.

The Civil Rights Monument at The University of Acme is a tribute to James Meredith who integrated The University of Acme in 1962, becoming the first African American student to attend the University. The Civil Rights Monument was dedicated in 2006 and serves as a point of pride for the institution. It is featured on the University’s Landmark Tour website and is on the cover of the University’s draft of a diversity report. In my interview with Cindy, she noted the idea for the monument developed out of a primarily White student effort to recognize the contributions of Meredith and others. Cindy recalled, “A group of students, mostly White
students decided that we needed to have a monument on our campus. And so they kind of led the movement and did research to get, drew up a plan, came up with a style for this monument, and so they put that plan out there.” What was supposed to be a unifying moment for students and the campus later divided the working-group along racial lines. During the planning process the students were faced with the decision of how to best proceed with the plans for the monument based on the feedback received from the University. The original design was deemed unsafe and a new design needed to be considered. Cindy described the tension between the students and the original organizer of the effort.

It was determined that students still wanted, White and Black students still wanted a monument but this person who had kind of led the movement for this particular structure was married to that structure and something that wasn't really about race became it had this look of race because you had these Blacks who said 'we want a structure' and the White individual who led this movement saying 'no structure if I can't have the structure I want.'

Cindy understood the monument could have been a divisive moment for her campus, yet, the experience helped the university administration to realize the need for someone at the senior level to assist the University in navigating hot button diversity issues. She said:

What came out of that in addition to the monument was Dr. [Jackson’s] position that I mentioned earlier which kind of showed us as an institution that we needed a person to navigate race at a higher level on our campus and we needed a person of color around the table when big decisions were being made because at that point for the most part the Chancellor's cabinet didn't have any chocolate people. (laugh)

Although Cindy found humor in her statement about the lack of diversity on the Chancellor’s Cabinet, the tensions surrounding the monument highlighted the need to have the involvement of someone well-versed in diversity with decision-making. The University administration should have been more thoughtful and proactive in recognizing the value of diversity instead of being reactive in response to a potentially divisive moment.
The final design of the statue (Figure 6) depicts James Meredith walking through an opening of a columned structure. On the side of each structure are the words courage, perseverance, knowledge, and opportunity. Deliberately, on the side where Meredith’s statue is positioned is the word courage and the side he is walking through is opportunity. The positioning of the words on the monument implies that it took courage for Meredith to take advantage of an opportunity. The words and language symbolize the complexity of access to higher education. Instead of viewing higher education as an opportunity for Meredith and others, higher education could be viewed as Meredith seizing an opportunity and walking with courage through the doors of an institution he knew had not welcomed any person of color before him. In this monument, the University continues to write the dominant narrative of the value of higher education, particularly for people of color, who were not the original intended beneficiaries of higher education.

Figure 6. The University of Acme’s Civil Rights Monument
James Meredith attended the dedication of the Civil Rights Monument in 2006, but has become more apprehensive in recent years about being memorialized as part of the monument. Dr. Jackson noted that in a conversation with Meredith, he requested to have the statue removed, but the University did not honor his request. More recently, Meredith has requested that the dedication plaque at the base of the statue be removed, citing his personal views on idolatry. The statement at the base of the James Meredith statue reads:

James Meredith, a native of Kosciusko, stepped into the pages of history on October 1, 1962 when he opened the doors of higher education at [The University of Acme] and in the South. As a major figure in the American civil rights movement, he helped lead the way to justice and equality for all citizens.

The University has again declined to remove the words at the base of the statue, further complicating its already tenuous relationship with Meredith. It is unclear as to what will become of the statue although it remains a point of pride for the University. The University’s interests remain intact while Meredith’s interests remain largely ignored. It is ironic that the man whom the University lauds as opening the door for civil rights and integration is having his own rights suppressed by the same institution that he integrated 50 years ago.

The Civil Rights Monument at The University of Acme is only one tangible reminder of the University’s complex relationship with diversity. On the other side of campus away from the monument is a new parking lot that was once the home for the University’s National Pan-Hellenic (NPHC) sororities, the traditional African American Greek lettered organizations. The NPHC sororities occupied former faculty residences as their houses on campus as places where members could live in community similar to their Panhellenic Council and Interfraternity Council peers. The houses no longer exist today as they were torn down for a new parking lot that serves in part as parking for the predominately White sorority houses nearby.
The NPHC houses were not relocated to another area. There were no considerations given to providing alternate housing options for the NPHC sororities to live together on campus. The University owned the land and determined it was in the University’s best interest to displace the NPHC sororities in favor of easing parking congestion on campus.

![Figure 7. The University of Acme’s Former Home of NPHC Sorority Houses](image)

The Civil Rights monument and parking lot at The University of Acme are examples of the complex relationship that can exist between predominately White universities and underrepresented populations. The inability of The University of Acme to accommodate Meredith and the NPHC sororities continues to perpetuate an environment that values people of color and other underrepresented populations only when it is in the best interest of the university. Ole Acme is not unique in this struggle. The outcome of what is best for the university and what is best for underrepresented populations who are part of the university community continue to advance the interests of the university. If universities such as The University of Acme want to advance a diversity agenda or at the very least portray a public commitment to its diverse
constituents, then university administrators need to reexamine the relationships with its diverse constituents and find solutions in the best interest of their university and its diverse community.

**Relationship to Chief Diversity Officer**

The Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) in higher education is lauded as the senior university administrator whose role involves staying abreast of diversity issues on campus and seeking ways to advance the university’s diversity agenda. The specific role and function of the Chief Diversity Officer can vary by institution. Two of the three research participants interviewed discussed having a Chief Diversity Officer on their campus. Cindy noted that her campus did not have a person with the title of Chief Diversity Officer, but rather had a senior administrator whose role included working on diversity issues at the university. In describing the administrator, Cindy commented:

> [Jeffrey Jackson] is a professor here and Dr. [Jackson] was a part of the student group that went to jail after the protest that happened in the late ’60s early ’70s and he is now probably as close as we can get a Chief Diversity Officer. So, the University brought him back and put him in a leadership role.

I met Dr. Jackson as part of my visit and tour of The University of Acme during my research study and I found him to be knowledgeable about the history of The University of Acme as it related to diversity. Cindy appeared to respect Dr. Jackson and spoke highly of him and his decision to return to The University of Acme to assist the university in its diversity efforts, after being expelled as a student for trying to diversify the campus so many years ago.

Mike had a similar respect for the Chief Diversity Officer at The University of Acme. Mike’s knowledge of the Chief Diversity Officer dated back to his time as an undergraduate student. Mike indicated a deep admiration for the Chief Diversity Officer. This admiration extended beyond his professional capacities and into his personal interactions with the Chief
Diversity Officer and the two maintained a good working relationship. Mike, however, lacked a broad perspective on diversity which could be an asset or a hindrance to the Chief Diversity Officer executing his vision for diversity on campus. In the interview, Mike articulated a message that aligned with the Chief Diversity Officer’s vision. In many ways, the Chief Diversity Officer was very hands-on with the operation of the Multicultural Center at The University of Acme, which may have inhibited the CDO from working on university-wide diversity efforts. Mike’s personal relationship with the Chief Diversity officer afforded Mike the opportunity to become the director of his office but it was indeterminate how this relationship would impact diversity efforts long-term.

Conversely, Phillip’s relationship to the Chief Diversity Officer at Acme University can be described as a contentious relationship. When asked about how university administration viewed diversity on his campus, Phillip gave an extended response that highlighted his frustration with the University’s Chief Diversity Officer. Phillip said;

…the Associate Provost for Diversity and Multicultural Affairs to me is clueless about diversity. He is anti-gay, which is a challenge. He is a mathematician by trade. His experience, his life experience, is that of an international student and an international scholar. He was selected for the position because he started an advising program for the College of Science and Mathematics and that's his track record and history with diversity. To me that range and scope is much too narrow to be in charge of an entire diversity area because his experience is extremely limited and that is evidenced in his statements and his actions and his budgetary, um, I guess manipulation. A lot of money goes to students that are coming into STEM programs, math and things like that but none for general student life, student retention, student programs and things like that. I don't see a commitment and to me that is a problem. It's a problem.

Phillip and his Chief Diversity Officer had differing opinions on how diversity should be implemented at Acme University. Phillip thought that his Chief Diversity Officer was unqualified to hold the position due to his limited knowledge in the field. Phillip’s assessment of the Chief Diversity Officer raised legitimate concerns of the competency of the person in the
position. The strained relationship between the Chief Diversity Officer and the Director of the Multicultural Center was evidenced by the strategic budget cuts to the Multicultural Center. Phillip noted that his office received additional cuts above and beyond what other departments received; an approximate thirty percent was cut from this area while other departments received a seven percent cut. When asked how this relationship impacted his work, Phillip responded:

You know the environment is good cause I don't get the most or best support from our Vice Provost but he also doesn't bother me. He doesn't even talk to me really. It's odd. He doesn't talk to me. I can't remember a significant conversation with him about an issue related to diversity or anything for that matter. Um, that's a challenge but because he doesn't bother me so I get to work autonomously.

Phillip may have worked autonomously but his CDO had systematically cut his ability to be effective in his role. The lack of resources either hindered worthwhile diversity programs or force Phillip to leave the university altogether. Phillip’s relationship with his CDO highlights the importance of the relationship between the CDO and the director. To advance a diversity agenda there needs to be a synergy between the Chief Diversity Officer, who is often responsible for creating the vision for diversity, and the person who has a key role in that effort.

My relationship with the former CDO at Acme State University was a hybrid between the relationships Mike and Cindy had with their CDO or senior diversity administrator. We both possessed a passion for making the university more inclusive. I respected her uncanny ability to remain unapologetic about the mission to advance the diversity agenda while advancing the mission on her own terms. She was a staunch ally and supporter. She commanded a room and left you inspired. I benefitted from her coming up through the ranks of Multicultural Affairs and from having worked with her years before she became the Chief Diversity Officer. We often strategized about the best approaches for situations as they occurred. What stood out for me was that the opinions of those with whom she worked mattered. We were often consulted when
making tough decisions. In addition to all of these attributes, she was knowledgeable and forward thinking about diversity, how to be creative about how we thought about diversity, and how we executed the vision for diversity. We felt part of a team that worked together in a climate that could at times be indifferent and resistant to our efforts. Since her departure for a promotional opportunity at another institution, we have lacked that synergy.

**Racial Realism**

Racial realism provides context for understanding that racism is part of the everyday experience (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). The participants in this study experienced racial realism in their roles and as they navigated their campuses. Cindy noted in her interview that university administrators advance diversity on her campus as they see fit, which “feels like racial battle fatigue.” This statement indicated that Cindy may not see a resolution to the two issues she faced of having no formal Chief Diversity Officer and no Multicultural Center on her campus. Racial Battle Fatigue is the manifestation of stressors related to race in educational, institutional, and societal contexts (Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). Cindy’s notation that she felt her work was “never-ending” could have been the manifestations of racial realism in not having the support on her campus. University played a role in intentionally perpetuating racism by not providing the staff or financial resources for Cindy to operate effectively in her role. The University continues to operate in a restrictive view of diversity rather than an expansive view by not providing adequate support for diversity efforts. Its celebration of historical milestones and promoting some current successful diversity efforts are mere appeasement to serve as distractions to the larger issues of the need for a long-term diversity plan that includes a CDO and a Multicultural Center.
Similarly, Phillip’s suggestion that the University President is “indifferent to diversity” and the Chief Diversity Officer is “clueless about diversity” suggested systemic exclusionary practices that will continue to occur as there is no tangible vision for advancing diversity on his campus. Phillip’s reality of racial realism was very present. He worked in a system that was comfortable with what he saw as an ineffective Chief Diversity Officer and a President who did not see diversity as a priority.

Mike’s conceptualization of racial realism was slightly different in that he did not acknowledge the role race and stereotypes affect his work. Framing the Multicultural Center as a place where African American students would play video games and hangout was a stereotypical and racist way to perceive student social engagement. Mike did not understand that the African American students’ concerns of losing ownership of the Multicultural Center to Latino students further exacerbated racial realism, making Mike complicit in its impact on his campus and in his work.

**Interest Convergence**

The participants in this research study discussed instances of interest convergence at their universities. Bell (1995) suggested that efforts to advance diversity will only be successful when it operates in the best interest of Whites. The very location of the Multicultural Centers and Multicultural Affairs offices is a result of interest convergence. The location of Centers and offices in Student Centers or Student Unions signifies that diversity can be housed in a central core building of campus, but often these Centers are located away from the main parts of the building, hidden corners or floors away from the main flow of traffic. Phillip’s office at The University of Acme was the only case of the Center being located on the first floor.
The struggle between James Meredith’s wishes to be removed from the Civil Rights Monument and former home of the NPHC sororities at The University of Acme, and the appointment of Dr. Jackson, serving as a defacto CDO, are also examples of interest convergence. In the case of the Civil Rights Monument, the university determined it was in its best interest to move forward with having a monument on campus. When Meredith decided he did not want to have his likeness as part of the monument, the university administration decided it was in the best interest of the University for the Monument to remain intact. The university’s interest in keeping a seminal piece of its physical commitment to diversity overshadowed Meredith’s personal wishes. Similarly, the faculty homes that were the residences of the NPHC sororities clashed with the University’s interests to provide adequate parking on campus. No longer in the best interest of the University to have the NPHC sorority houses in their location, the houses were torn down to make way for the parking lot. The University’s interest in parking spaces outweighed providing a space where students of African American Greek lettered organizations could live on campus. Unfortunately, these examples affirm diversity will advance only when it satisfies White interests (Bell, 1995). In instances where satisfying White interests are not the dominant outcome, underrepresented populations stand to lose what progress has been made in favor of keeping the dominant group’s interests intact.

**Diversity From an Equity Perspective**

The goal of advancing a progressive diversity agenda can be challenging if the commitment from university administration is not present. A critique of diversity efforts is the lack of assessment measures to quantify the effectiveness of programs and services that have traditionally been established to provide social support for diverse students. Oftentimes, these programs are assessed from the perspective of using either quantitative or qualitative data. In
some cases, the programs have not been accessed at all for fear of using assessment data as justification to eliminate programs and services (Williams, 2013).

An alternative to a purely diversity based framework is the inclusion of the “access and equity” perspective. Bensimon (2004) suggested an access and equity perspective as a means to further bolster and understand diversity efforts. This comparison method provides data based on underrepresented student populations in relation to their majority student population peers. The “access and equity” perspective is not a substitution for diversity efforts but can instead drive diversity efforts with the inclusion of measures aimed at creating a campus demographic that is representative of outlined diversity goals and measures. In this regard, Mike and the CDO at The University of Acme found an innovative way to frame their diversity efforts around access and opportunity for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Their approach, however, could be further enhanced by including diversity efforts in their vision of creating more financial resources for students. The inclusion of an access and equity perspective coupled with diversity efforts can provide a more balanced approach to advancing an inclusive diversity agenda.

In this chapter, I examined the challenge of Multicultural Centers and other campus spaces where diversity efforts can be operationalized. The relationships of the participants to the university’s Chief Diversity Officer were also examined. The CRT tenets of racial realism, interest convergence, and counterstories were explored through the major findings from the participant interviews. An alternative framing of diversity from an equity perspective was developed. The final chapter will highlight opportunities for framing diversity in higher education from a mid-level diversity professional perspective.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION: THE PROMISE FOR DIVERSITY

…Karl sits in his office wondering what went wrong. As he looks around the room he remembers all of the successes he had with the Grill-o-matic530. In one photo there is a picture of him with the president of the company. Another picture shows him with a picture of the Grill-o-matic530 as the first one rolled off the assembly line. Now those days seem all but a distant memory. It has been three months since the explosion on live TV. The effort to relaunch the Grill-o-matic530 was disastrous. Not only was the market saturated with 530s, the results from the investigation concluded that a defective gas grill igniter was the cause for the explosion. There were thousands of 530s in stores and thousands more in homes across the country. The national scrutiny was intensive. To make matters worse DatelineNBC conducted its own investigation on the failures of the Grill-o-matic530 and Karl was asked to be the company spokesman for the interview. Karl tried to spruce himself up by putting on his best suit. “What am I going to say?” Karl asked himself when told he would be speaking with a reporter later that day. The interview did not go well. When asked by the reporter to explain why the gas grill igniter malfunctioned, Karl could not provide an explanation. When provided with the report from the engineers to decipher, Karl did not understand the terminology used to detail the problems with the gas grill igniter, but Karl stayed on message. “Grill-o-matic, Inc. regrets the tragic incident that occurred with our Grill-o-matic530. The recalls are an effort to ensure that our customers are safe. Despite the problems with the gas grill igniter, we stand behind the Grill-o-matic530,” Karl responded. “I knew I should have attended those training workshops or gone back to school,” Karl said to himself after the interview.

After the interview Karl knew he had to tell his boss about the interview that would be viewed by millions on TV. This would not be good for the company. When Karl gave his boss
Dave a recap on the interview, his boss was supportive. Karl, however, realized that there was much to learn about Grill-o-matics and his company. He wondered how he would ever learn enough to prevent such an occurrence from happening again.

**Analyzing the Story**

Counterstory, as a tool, assists readers with understanding the absurdities located within reality that so often are overlooked, particularly as they relate to diversity, generally, and race, specifically (Delgado, 1989, 1990; Lawrence, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2005; Decuir & Dixson, 2004; Fasching-Varner, 2009). Counterstory aims to reveal the faulty nature of the logic that undergirds our daily interactions and experiences that we may take for granted. A professional such as a mid-level diversity manager, a university administrator, and those in positions where their identities are privileged may be able to see the problems that are present within their contexts. Counterstory telling allows CRT scholars to draw on real experiences, think about their fictional absurdities, and present a narrative that makes clear the troubles inherent in ‘dominant’ narrative or experience, and to begin understanding how the troubles impact those from underrepresented populations.

Many scholars have misunderstood the role of CRT counterstory (Ladson-Billings, 2006, 2013). The purpose of counterstory is not simply for those of underrepresented populations to tell their stories. CRT as an analytical field values the voices and experiential knowledge base of people of color. Counterstory telling, instead, is intended to work analytically to link the real circumstances of a dominant narrative or experience through a fictionalized, and in some ways metaphorical, account presented within a narrative. For a reader, connections can be made once the elements of the story are unpacked against the realities.
This dissertation document provided the first glimpse of the counterstory as an interlude chapter (Chapter 4) between the methods and findings. I made an active choice to not explain the purpose of the story, but rather to let the reader engage the counterstory, then experience the data and findings, before coming back to the story and having the story be unpacked. The findings of this dissertation help readers to make sense of the story which in turn cycles back to help make more sense of the findings.

The story elements presented provide an opportunity to examine the major elements presented in the portraits of the mid-level diversity management professionals. Through Karl we are able to understand the journey of mid-level diversity management professionals, their view of diversity, and their experiences with challenging situations. Karl’s story also provides a lens through which to view tenets of CRT that mid-level diversity management professionals experience. To unpack the story elements I have provided a table (Table 2) below:

Table 2: (Counter) story Elements Unpacked

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element from the Story</th>
<th>Actual Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karl</td>
<td>Mid-level diversity management professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grill-o-matic, Inc.</td>
<td>Predominately White Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grill-o-matic Training and Development Office</td>
<td>Multicultural Affairs Offices and Centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grill-o-matic520</td>
<td>Mid-level diversity management professional’s passion for diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explosion</td>
<td>Diversity Crisis Moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Chief Diversity Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President of Development</td>
<td>PWI Senior Administrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl’s Educational Background</td>
<td>Education background of many mid-level diversity management professionals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Table 2 continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element from the story</th>
<th>Actual Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karl’s Professional Instincts</td>
<td>Lack of training of mid-level diversity management professionals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the counterstory, Karl’s passion for grilling was evidenced through his obsession with the Grill-o-matic520. Karl eventually landed a job at Grill-o-matic, Inc. without any formal education specific to the position. He was able to navigate his way through the company until faced with the explosion of the Grill-o-matic530, his crisis moment. When faced with dealing with the crisis moment Karl’s decision to expand the product line proved costly. Karl’s decisions were based on his limited experience, education, and training. Although fictional, Karl’s story combined the major findings from this research study. Like Karl, the mid-level diversity management professionals in the research study used their experience, education, and training to navigate not only their daily roles but also diversity crisis moments and other challenging situations. Karl helped us to see the importance of having a professional at Grill-o-matic, Inc. who could have prevented or at the very least been able to assess and provide a resolution for the crisis moment. Similarly, through the key elements of Karl’s story, we note the importance of having mid-level diversity management professionals who have the experience, education, and training to conceptualize their view of diversity on their campus and how they navigate challenging situations on their campuses.

The counterstory provides a method to better understand CRT. The tenets of expansive vs. restrictive and interest convergence are highlighted as presented in the research findings. Through a restrictive view of Karl’s lack of education and training, he is unable to adequately respond to the Grill-o-matic530 explosion. In an expansive view, Karl’s education, training, and experience adequately position him to respond effectively to the crisis moment. In an expansive
view mid-level diversity management professionals possess the skills, knowledge, and education through their professional journey, view of diversity, and role in challenging situations to successfully navigate a diversity crisis moment.

Interest convergence was demonstrated through Grill-o-matic, Inc.’s failure to hire someone other than Karl as Director of Training and Product Development. Grill-o-matic, Inc.’s interests were maintained by failing to acknowledge any wrongdoing yet continuing to flood the market with its product. Similarly, PWIs must be cognizant of the needs of all crises of its constituents including those from underrepresented populations. Universities must hire qualified staff and assume an active role in addressing diversity crisis moments and other challenging situations.

**A Different Outcome?**

For the study participants, and likely many other mid-level diversity management professionals, we find ourselves involved in increasingly complex terrain. Scant literature is available to help understand the work of mid-level diversity management professionals (Brimhall-Vargas, 2012; Lea, Tuber, Jones & Wolfgram, 2012), and to help mid-level diversity professionals deal the complexity of the of small and large scale crisis moments with which we are charged to address. This dissertation has provided me with the opportunity to reflect on the turbulent and tumultuous times in which we collectively find ourselves. Budgets across higher education have become leaner, there are increased pressures to retain and graduate students in a timely manner, and we have any number of social crises which have an effect on how people interact. For the three external participants and me, race related issues surfaced not just on our campus but also within the larger social contexts that surround universities. The case of George Zimmerman killing Trayvon Martin is one example that reminds us that color-blind ideology of a
post-racial society is a myth (Clark, Fasching-Varner, & Brimhall-Vargas, 2012); despite having made what looks like progress (the election of President Obama, for example), struggles around the diversity and plurality of participation within the US landscape remains complex. And, here we professionals find ourselves, charged with helping institutions and individuals to make sense of each other within these situations.

In many cases, institutions lack of vision, focused commitment, strong leadership, and/or professional development and training exacerbate the difficulties of the aims of diversity and inclusion. As a result some institutions have shifted their focus away from inclusive diversity efforts, while some have focused on improving their diversity efforts, and many others are simply trying to survive. Mid-level diversity management professionals in higher education have endured the first wave of the storm, similar to what we might experience in Louisiana when a hurricane comes- establishing diversity offices and centers where we attempt to hunker down and endure resistance from within and without as we work through critical moments. A challenge becomes how to rebuild the structure of diversity and equity within institutions in the wake of the storm. That is, in the rush and reactive process of establishing “fixes” to the crisis of diversity, many institutions have yet to realize that what has been established may not best address the aims of becoming truly inclusive. As the findings of this research suggest, ‘professionals’ who find themselves in mid-level diversity roles are often ill-equipped and under trained in how to work at the larger systemic issues that create barriers within institutions. If the work of institutions limits them to ideas of diversity as difference and working only to calm historically marginalized students, then they will never establish themselves as places where all students, staff, and faculty experience the institution as reflecting who we all are. The findings presented in this study suggest that the time is ripe to focus our priorities on the next wave of
diversity challenges to move from diversity as difference and toward diversity as equity (Owen, 2009). Access and opportunity, diversity in a post-racial society, and dwindling financial resources are but a few of the challenges in our path, and by enacting diversity as difference we unwittingly (or perhaps not) create a “race- and gender-neutral approach…[which] fails to account for the current sociohistorical context in which we find ourselves, which is one that is fundamentally structured to systemically advantage Whites and men” (Owen, 2009, p. 188). We have “inherited from the past a legacy of racial and gender domination that is embedded in the structures” of institutions, but we are not obliged to inherit a future which continues to ignore the realities within institutions to continue favoring the interests of already overrepresented groups (Owens, 2009, p. 188).

The purpose of this research study was to examine diversity crisis moments from the perspective of mid-level diversity management professionals in higher education. These singular watershed moments were to provide a backdrop for the level of involvement of mid-level diversity management professionals in addressing these moments of crisis and how they worked with the campus community to mitigate the impact of these challenging events. What I found, however, was a different diversity crisis than what I expected. Thankfully, the participants interviewed for this study, did not experience any singular watershed diversity crisis moments. They and I, were and are, however, having professional diversity crisis experiences of their/our own. This diversity crisis involves a lack of professional training, issues related to space and space allocation, conceptualizations of diversity, an inability to conceptualize a diversity crisis moment itself, and complex relationships with the Chief Diversity Officers within institutions. These challenges have the participants searching for ways to navigate their daily work, and to
make a difference. Some, like Philip and me, have been successful in navigating through these challenges while others have not reached the apex of success.

I see some differences between myself and my work and my colleagues. The participants in this study and other colleagues who do this type of work have not had the opportunity to find their place or purpose in their work. Once I was at a point of trying to navigate my way without formal training or vision of how to do diversity work – I was after all a Biological Sciences major. I am similar to Cindy and Mike in that we have had a similar journey to the profession but I believe I have been more successful than they were in moving through the diversity crisis in which they find themselves. My professional experiences, a CDO who supported and challenged me to consider my work differently, and pursuing a terminal degree with a research interest in diversity, helped me move past my own diversity crisis. It would be easy to say that one day I had an epiphany, an ah-ha moment, where the sun came out and the birds started singing sweet music of diversity and inclusions such that the realization of how to conceptualize this work differently revealed itself – but that was not that case. Like Karl, the protagonist of the counterstory, I had my own crisis moment six years ago. It was the spring of 2007, and my office was just rebounding from our own watershed diversity crisis moment of 2005, when the campus experienced a series of protests by our African American students during home football games over the Purple and Gold Confederate Flag. The staff of Multicultural Affairs experienced tremendous pressure and stress from students to understand their anger and frustration over the losses experienced during Hurricane Katrina that occurred that same semester, and the projections of that anger onto the very visible Confederate Flag in their school’s colors. The protests were led primarily by students from the New Orleans area, the area most devastated by Hurricane Katrina, and tested our professional and individual feelings about how we, as a staff,
engaged diversity on our campus. As the director of the office at that time, I was called a sellout by the student protestors and their constituents for not joining their cause and was viewed as ineffective by University administration because I could not make the protests just go away. The protests eventually ended but I was left professionally and personally battered and bruised consistent with Smith’s (2008, 2010) discussions of Racial Battle Fatigue. I wandered through the next year and a half just trying to survive. I contemplated leaving both my job and diversity work behind. I started reflecting on the years I spent doing diversity work and what I realized was that the series of protests were not my fault. I had not fallen short in executing my responsibilities as director. In fact, the very nature of students agitating the university over the injustices that the students perceived was evidence that I had created a space where the students could recognize, plan, and act in ways that had not existed before. While the University may not have thought its interests were being served by the student protests, the space for students to engage in such a behavior revealed a sense that they saw the institution as mattering enough to push back against the administration and demand an equitable outcome. This realization was rewarding, however, if I wanted to continue doing diversity work, I had to expand the definition of diversity by which I operated. The University and my office could no longer focus exclusively on African American students as we had done for so many years. Our emerging population of Hispanic students and growing LGBTQ student population deserved our resources and professional support. According to Owen (2009), it meant moving from diversity as a single difference to reaching for a situation where the pursuit of diversity was a pursuit of the space to create equity for all. During this time, I worked to be more intentional and more inclusive in the ways in which I approached diversity and particularly my work; thus, I am pursuing a PhD in higher education to gain theoretical and analytical tools to combine with my professional
experiences. As acknowledged by Philip, specific training and development related to diversity and higher education allows for more robust questions, conversations, and actions to take place.

During my tenure as director, Acme University has been recognized and honored nationally for its diversity work through individual awards and through its centralized diversity office. Even with these recognitions, it has been a challenging experience to assist the university in thinking about diversity differently and outreaching to students who traditionally have not been provided services and resources. There is still much work to be done but clearly diversity on my campus is moving forward, provided that we keep our positive momentum and continue to provide training and development for our staff.

I do not share my story with the hope that the study participants experience their own diversity crisis moment and conceptualize their work differently. I present my story as an alternative to Karl’s story, and to show that there can be positive outcomes from a diversity crisis moment. I share my story with the hope that other mid-level diversity management professionals understand that change is possible and probable in the midst of their own diversity crisis professional experience. It takes personal commitment, training, and action but the promise of doing diversity work in an inclusive environment, working toward equity, provides a myriad of opportunities to expand the campus definition of diversity as well as the growth in professional experiences. Through these means, the diversity crisis of professional experience can be diminished.

**Resources for Mid-level Diversity Management Professionals**

In addition to implementing the strategic diversity leadership framework, there are a number of other resources for mid-level diversity management professionals seeking to expand their skills, knowledge, and experience in diversity. The resources provided in this chapter are
but a few of the many opportunities available for mid-level diversity management professionals to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to successfully advance a diversity agenda on their campus. The inclusion of any one of these resources in a professional development plan would be a first step in equipping mid-level diversity management professionals with the necessary skills to do their jobs effectively. Collectively, the resources serve as a strong foundation for integrating multiple ways of thinking about diversity regionally, nationally, and within the specific area of cultural centers.

The creation of networks for professionals in similar positions would be a useful tool for any diversity professional but particularly mid-level diversity management professionals. The SEC Multicultural Network, Association of Black Cultural Centers, and the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education are professional organizations that provide such networking opportunities. For example, the SEC Multicultural Network was created as a way for directors of multicultural centers or similarly situated areas to share ideas and discuss challenges on their campuses. This brain trust situates the conversation about diversity related issues within a group that is intimately connected to the work on a daily basis. Only in its second year, the Network serves as an opportunity for directors who had not previously communicated with each other while engaging in diversity work. The Network already serves as an opportunity for directors new to the SEC to meet colleagues and make connections with other directors. It also serves as a professional development opportunity as a two day conference is held at an SEC school and hosted by a member of the Network. This valuable resource could be replicated in other conferences or group of institutions seeking to better understand how to provide support for mid-level diversity management professionals.
The Association of Black Cultural Centers (ABCC) and the annual ABCC Conference serve as other resources for directors of multicultural centers and other similarly situated areas. Although founded to serve as a resource primarily for Black Cultural Centers, the ABCC has grown to include Multicultural Centers. The ABCC provides resources for the successful operation of Cultural Centers as well as serving as the official accrediting body for Cultural Centers on campuses across the nation. The annual ABCC Conference provides professional development opportunities with nationally renowned diversity speakers, a pre-conference institute, and round-table discussions. These professional development opportunities can provide mid-level diversity management professionals with promising best approaches to advancing diversity work on their campuses.

Finally, the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity in American Higher Education (NCORE) is the leading diversity conference in higher education. The goal of the annual conference is to provide a medium for practitioner and scholarly-based approaches to advancing diversity efforts in higher education. Attendance at NCORE provides participants with an opportunity to engage with scholars and colleagues from a diverse range of backgrounds, institution types, and professionals with various professional experiences. These networking and educational experiences can enhance the knowledge and skills of any mid-level diversity management professional. NCORE is a valuable resource for mid-level diversity management professionals seeking different ways to think about their work.

**Implications for Mid-level Diversity Management Professionals**

Mid-level diversity management professionals need the training and development to identify the moments that create both threats and opportunities for diversity. Not every diversity crisis moment will be large in scope, however, mid-level diversity management professionals
should consider to what extent they will be involved in such an event should a diversity crisis moment happen on their campus. If mid-level diversity management professionals are able to identify and understand their role in a diversity crisis moment, they may be able to mitigate potential diversity crisis moments and serve as a resource for university administration. The ability to navigate their offices or other places of significance on campus is critical to the success of any mid-level diversity management professional.

The support from the Chief Diversity Officer or other senior diversity administrator cannot be overlooked. In instances where there is an evidence of support, the mid-level diversity management professional can be actively engaged in diversity efforts. In instances where there appears to be a lack of support from the Chief Diversity Officer, the mid-level diversity management professional can appear to be undervalued or underutilized which may cause a lack of synergy and hamper diversity efforts.

**Implications for Chief Diversity Officers**

Chief Diversity Officers and other senior administrators need to exercise caution when hiring mid-level diversity management professionals. These positions are critical to the university’s commitment to diversity and advancing a diversity agenda, and the successful candidate should have a level of professional experience in the field and be provided with a level of support from the university. Hiring a person of color who lacks the knowledge and skills in diversity to lead an office or center in order to have the position filled is not enough. The mid-level diversity management professional must have a professional skill set and competencies to create buy-in for a diversity agenda but also must operate independently. Failure to hire and support mid-level diversity management professionals may result in stalled or unsuccessful diversity efforts.
Directions for Future Research

The findings of this research provide opportunities for further research about diversity in higher education. The expertise of mid-level diversity management professionals is invaluable and should be further studied. In the span of their careers it is inevitable that a mid-level diversity management professional will encounter a diversity crisis moment. A larger sample of mid-level diversity management professionals may yield more substantial diversity crisis moments that can be studied for their impact on the work of these professionals. A larger study of how mid-level diversity management professionals manage these moments would provide findings that could be critical to a university’s image and relationship with underrepresented populations. This study could also be conducted with Chief Diversity Officers or with both Chief Diversity Officers and mid-level diversity management professionals.

A study of mid-level diversity management professionals’ perceptions of strategic diversity leadership is another area for future research. Williams (2013) suggested the framework for all diversity professionals but the focus on mid-level diversity management professionals is an understudied area of research. As these professionals are oftentimes situated at the mid-manager level, the focus on strengthening their leadership regarding diversity issues may be overlooked. Further examination of the experiences of these professionals may provide tangible frameworks, resources, and professional development opportunities to assist mid-level diversity management professionals in their roles.

The portraits this research study can be situated on a spectrum relative to where mid-level diversity management professionals fall in relation to their overall preparation and ability to think critically about diversity work on their campus. The portraits of Mike and Cindy fall at the beginning of the spectrum. Their portraits provide us with examples of passionate, well
intentioned professionals who were not formally trained in diversity work. Mike and Cindy found their way to diversity by accident or as a result of a career change. They exuded a passion for the work, however, they were limited in their conceptual understanding of how to implement diversity outside of their locus of control. Phillip’s portrait provided us with the extreme end of the spectrum. Phillip was trained in a multicultural affairs office as a graduate student and had practical professional work experience in a multicultural affairs office. He had a terminal degree and his dissertation focused on diversity work. Phillip was frustrated because of the restrictions the university placed on him, as he had acquired the skills necessary to do diversity work effectively. My portrait falls between Mike’s and Cindy’s portraits and Phillip’s portrait. I was not trained in diversity work; rather I gained tangible experience as a professional. I was influenced by a CDO who understood diversity from a holistic perspective. As a result, I was included in decisions and issues that spanned the campus. Finally, I am working to complete an advanced degree with a focus in higher education with an interest in diversity research.

Examined individually, the four portraits could appear to be discrete pathways to diversity management but when examined together, I believe the portraits provide a clearer picture of the current challenges, opportunities, and experiences of diversity management professionals working at PWIs. Understanding the findings from these portraits is critical to understanding the value in having mid-level diversity management professionals who are passionate, skillful, knowledgeable, savvy, and able to assist the university in reaching its diversity goals, or able to challenge the university to do better in enhancing diversity on its campus.

The systemic and pervasive institutional practices of predominately White institutions as spaces with traditionally exclusive and unwelcoming environments for people of color, and other
underrepresented groups, requires diversity training for professionals who work in diversity at the mid-management level. Often these professionals work directly with students and staff who regularly engage students. One should not be designated to work in diversity on a predominately White campus by virtue of being a person of color with a good heart or a passionate spirit. When universities began experiencing increased enrollments of African American students and other students of color in the 1950s (Patton & Hannon, 2008), the primary focus was for a staff person to whom the students could relate and who could assist with their transition and assimilation to campus. There was no guarantee that the staff person, often African American, was trained in diversity work or understood diversity outside of creating a safe and welcoming space for underrepresented students. The field of diversity management positions diversity, equity, inclusion, and cultural intelligence as tangible skills needed to strategically and effectively advance diversity work in a higher education setting (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Universities that continue to hire candidates who do not possess a skill set in diversity work are employing a deficit model for diversity. This way of thinking about diversity is antiquated at best and highlights the inability of university administrators to see diversity management as a field that can produce candidates with a knowledge base in diversity work. While diversity management is still a new and emerging field, there are established pathways that can assist any diversity management professional, but particularly mid-level diversity management professionals, to create learning opportunities to gain knowledge and experience in diversity work. While passion can fuel a desire to work in a system, mid-level diversity management professionals need to possess the appropriate training, knowledge, and skill set to excel in their positions. Obtaining advanced degrees in areas that have a diversity or social justice connection, progressively responsible work experience in a diversity focused area, and participation in
regional or national organizations that focus on diversity are but a few ways that those interested in mid-level diversity management can gain the skills needed to effectively engage diversity work on a college campus.
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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, all LSU research projects using living humans as subjects, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

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Applicant, please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts A-F, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit two copies of the completed application to the IRB Office or to a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee. Members of this committee can be found at http://research.lsu.edu/CompliancePoliciesProcedures/InstitutionalReviewBoard%28IRB%29/item24737.html

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A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:
(A) Two copies of this completed form and two copies of parts A-F.
(B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2).
(C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
(D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information).
(E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: (http://phpr.nittraining.com/users/login.php)
(F) IRB Security of Data Agreement: (http://research.lsu.edu/files/item25774.pdf)

1) Principal Investigator: Chaunda M. Allen
   Dept: ELRC
   Ph: 225-578-4309
   E-mail: callie18@lsu.edu

2) Co-Investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone, and e-mail for each.
   *If student, please identify and name supervising professor in this space

3) Project Title: Understanding diversity moments in higher education.

4) Proposal? (yes or no) [ ] NO [ ] YES, LSU Proposal Number
   Also, if YES, either [ ] This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant
   OR [ ] More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students): Directories of Multicultural Affairs in the SEC
   *Circle any "vulnerable populations" to be used: (children <18; the mentally impaired, pregnant women, the ages, other). Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature: Chaunda M. Allen
   Date: 4/16/13
   (no signature)

**I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changed, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted
Signed Consent Waived: Yes [ ] No [ ]
Reviewer: Kristin A. Gosse
Signature: _______ 
Date: 4/22/10
APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

1. Study Title: Diversity moments in higher education
2. Performance Site: Various SEC Universities
3. Investigators: The following investigators are available for questions about this study,
   M-F, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
   Ms. Chaunda M. Allen, 225-578-4309

4. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research project is to understand diversity
   moments in higher education, and how various constituents in university settings approach and
   understand these moments.

5. Subject Inclusion: Directors of Multicultural Affairs (or their equivalents)
6. Number of subjects: 4-6
7. Study Procedures: The study will be conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the principal
   investigator interview participants about diversity moments in their institutions and how such
   moments are understood and addressed. In the second phase, the PI will conduct follow-up
   interviews as well analyze various documents related to diversity moments.
8. Benefits: The study may yield valuable information about diversity in higher education.
9. Risks: There are no known risks to participating in this study.
10. Right to Refuse: Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any
    time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled.
11. Privacy: Results of the study may be published, but no all participants and their institutions
    will be given pseudonyms. To protect individuals and identity.

12. Signatures:

The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct
additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. If I have questions about
subjects' rights or other concerns, I can contact Robert C, Mathews, Institutional Review
Board,(225) 578-8692, irb@lsu.edu, www.lsu.edu/irb.

I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator's obligation

to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Subject Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Institutional Review Board
Dr. Robert Mathews, Chair
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
P: 225.578.8692
F: 225.578.6792
irb@lsu.edu | lsu.edu/irb

Study Exempted By:
Dr. Robert C. Mathews, Chairman
Institutional Review Board
Louisiana State University
203 B-1 David Boyd Hall
225-578-6592 | www.lsu.edu/irb
Exemption Expires: 4/21/2014

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APPENDIX C: SAMPLE E-MAIL TO PARTICIPANTS

July 14, 2013

Hello Mike the Tiger,

I hope this email finds you doing well. I am hoping that you will agree to participate in a Research Study I am doing for my dissertation. For my dissertation study I am looking at diversity crisis moments in higher education. I am hoping to expand the current crisis management in higher education literature by specifically looking at the experiences of how directors of multicultural affairs departments plan for and navigate campus diversity moments on their campuses.

My research study consists of three main parts. For the first part, I would like to conduct a 45 minute to one hour interview with you. The second part would consist of taking a tour of your office and spaces of interest to diverse student populations on your campus. The third part would be collecting any strategic plans, crisis management plans, and organizational charts. The interview will consist of a set of 10-12 questions. The interview will be recorded. I would like to come to the University of Arkansas to interview you in person. Would your schedule allow for a two hour block of time the week of August 5th-August 9th? Your responses will remain confidential. All participants and their institutions will be given pseudonyms.

I have attached my approved IRB form and consent form for your review. Dr. Kenneth Fasching-Varner, Assistant Professor, in the LSU College of Human Sciences and Education is serving as my dissertation chair. I have also copied him on this email.

Please let me know if there would be an opportunity for me to visit between July 29th and July 31st or the week of August 4th-8th. Thank you in advance.

Sincerely,
Chaunda

Chaunda M. Allen
Assistant to the Vice Provost &
Director, LSU Office of Multicultural Affairs
Office of Equity, Diversity & Community Outreach
Louisiana State University
135 Thomas Boyd Hall
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
(225) 578-4309 phone
(225) 578-7135 fax
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL QUESTIONS

General Questions

1. Talk to me about how long you have been doing diversity work, and what brought you to this work? Follow up question: How long have you worked in your current position?

2. Talk to me about the campus climate at your institution. Follow up question: How would you describe the campus climate relative to diversity at your institution?

3. How would you define a diversity crisis?

4. Have you encountered any diversity crisis moments while at your institution? If yes, tell me about the moment?

If the answer is ‘yes’ to question #4:

5. What happens or has happened when there is a diversity crisis moment on campus?

6. What things (time, human capital, context, stakeholders, resources, etc.) have you considered while managing a diversity crisis moment at your institution?

7. Which diversity crisis moment has been most challenging for you while in your current position?

8. What has been your level of responsibility managing diversity crisis moments at your institution? Talk to me about that.

9. Are you supported by the institution when managing diversity crisis moments? If yes, talk to me about how you are supported. If no, what type of support would you like to see?

10. Do you think your institution has been successful managing diversity crisis moments? Unsuccessful in managing diversity crisis moments? Explain.

11. Are there policies or procedures in place at your institution relative to diversity crisis moments? If so, what policies exist at your institution? (If no, go to question 12)

12. What policies might you like to see in place at your institution relative to diversity crisis moments?

If the answer is ‘no’ to question #4

5. If none, what would your level of responsibility be in managing a diversity crisis moment? Talk to me about that.
6. How do you think you would be supported by the institution when managing diversity crisis moments?

7. Do you think your institution would be successful in managing diversity crisis moments if one were to occur on your campus? Unsuccessful in managing diversity crisis moments? Explain.

8. Are there policies or procedures in place at your institution relative to diversity crisis moments? If yes, tell me what policies exist *(If no, go to question 9)*

9. What policies might you like to see in place at your institution relative to diversity crisis moments?
THE VITA

Chaunda Myretta Allen was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 1976. She graduated from Scotlandville Magnet High School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. In high school, Chaunda held many leadership positions including president of her Senior Class. Chaunda continued serving in leadership positions at Southern University and A & M College, serving as a senator for both the junior and senior class. While in college, Chaunda became a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., founded as the first Greek lettered organization for African American women. She graduated from Southern University with a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences with a concentration in Microbiology in 1999.

After a brief tenure as a high school biology and environmental science teacher, Chaunda accepted a position as coordinator in the Office of Multicultural Affairs at Louisiana State University. She was promoted to assistant director in 2003 and director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs in 2005. She graduated with a Master of Public Administration degree with a concentration in Higher Education from Louisiana State University in 2005.

Chaunda entered the doctoral program to pursue the doctor of philosophy degree in the Department of Educational, Theory, Policy, and Practice in educational leadership and research with a concentration in Higher Education in 2008. Her scholarly interests include diversity crisis management, holistic student development for students of color and other underrepresented populations, queer students of color in higher education, organizational management of diversity in higher education, best practices for diversity/student affairs professionals, and public service in higher education.

Chaunda was promoted to assistant to the Vice Provost for Equity, Diversity & Community Outreach and director of Multicultural Affairs in 2012. In this capacity, she assists
the Vice Provost for Equity, Diversity & Community Outreach with implementing the university’s diversity goals and working to promote the academic, leadership, and social opportunities for students of color and other underrepresented student populations. She was named National Advisor of the Year by Phi Iota Alpha, Fraternity, Inc., the nation’s oldest Latino fraternity in existence, becoming the first African American and first woman to receive the award in 2012. In 2013, Chaunda received the Legends Award by Spectrum and Equality Louisiana and was named National Fraternity Advisor of the Year by the National Association of Latin Fraternal Organizations.

Chaunda will be conferred the doctorate of philosophy at the 2013 Fall Commencement.