

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Research on the experiences of staff members of color is limited in comparison to faculty members of color when discussing difficulties faced in their roles, campus climate and overall job satisfaction. The data gathered from studies focused on faculty members of color helped explore the experience of a racially minoritized employee on a university campus. This information was used to inform this study and the interpretation of data for this study. Within this literature review the theoretical framework that shaped this study will be introduced. Next, the review will explore the ways in which campus climate has been perceived by faculty and staff members of color; the difficulties faced by faculty members of color; and the overall of levels of satisfaction staff members of color reported in regards to their work experiences.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Critical race theory (CRT) was created by legal scholars Derrick Bell (1989) and Kimberlé Crenshaw (1988) to be used, initially, from a legal standpoint. It has since been infused into education by professors Gloria Ladson-Billings and William Tate (1995). As stated by Hiraldo (2010), “CRT analyzes the role of race and racism in perpetuating social disparities between dominant and marginalized racial groups” (p. 54). Ladson-Billings cited the establishment of Affirmative Action as an example of this because White women have benefitted the most from a policy that was intended to benefit racially minoritized people; a reality which ultimately perpetuates the privilege of the dominant White population (Hiraldo, 2010). CRT can be divided into five tenets used to explore different forms of social inequities: *counterstorytelling*, *the permanence of racism*, *Whiteness as property*, *interest convergence* and *the critique of liberalism* (Hiraldo, 2010). This study highlights the tenet counterstorytelling by

sharing the lived experiences of minoritized others in order to understand retention from a different vantage point (Ladson-Billings, 2013).

First, the permanence of racism can be described as the way in which structural and institutional racism are reinforced (Hiraldo, 2010). Other researchers have referred to this tenant as *ordinariness*. Delgado and Stefancic (2012) describe permanence of racism or ordinariness as the way in which racism is not acknowledged and therefore difficult to address. White privilege in education is so prominent and common that it can be seen as the norm of society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Defining *power* and *privilege* as normal can lead to disregarding the existence of true racism.

Second, Whiteness as property can be described as the right to ownership based on being White (Hilrado, 2010). This entitlement to property is an asset granted to White people and stems from the roots of slavery in the United States. This form of *ownership* can be viewed in higher education through examining the number of faculty, staff, and administrators of color. As mentioned before, the population of faculty, staff and administrators consist of 80-90% White people (Kayes, 2006). With such a large population of White people, their opinions dominate educational spaces. Educational systems are also a part of systemic racism in which White privilege perpetuates accessibility for White individuals in education while hindering people of color (Hilrado, 2010). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) described the intersections of property and Whiteness in four distinct terms:

1. Rights of disposition;
2. Rights to use and enjoyment;
3. Reputation and status property; and
4. The absolute right to exclude.

As described by Cheryl Harris (1993), “being [W]hite means gaining access to a set of public and private privileges that allow for greater control over the critical aspects of one’s life” (Brown & Jackson, 2013, p. 19). The four distinct terms described by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) explain the ways in which privileges can be used to perpetuate accessibility for White people while oppressing minoritized individuals.

Third, *interest convergence* was defined by Bell as “[B]lack people making substantial progress against racial oppression when their interests align with those White elites” (Brown & Jackson, 2013, p. 14). The example presented earlier on from Ladson-Billings in regards to civil rights legislation primarily benefitting White people (Hiraldo, 2010) depicts how the racism experienced by minoritized people created the need for certain civil rights legislation, and in turn, ultimately benefits White people and perpetuates the usage of power and privilege. This same idea is also referred to as *material determinism*, in which there is little incentive found by White people to eradicate racism because of the advances it provides (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Fourth, *critique of liberalism* refers to the idea that all individuals have equal opportunities (Hilrado, 2010). References to ideas such as colorblindness and the neutrality of law are used to denounce thoughts on the social construction of race in order to define minoritized people as others (Hilrado, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Finally, *counterstorytelling* can be viewed as minoritized people naming their own realities juxtaposed against the viewpoint of the dominant population (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The usage of counterstorytelling helps minoritized people by allowing them an outlet to express their oppression to avoid internalization and causes dominant groups to self-reflect on their oppressive actions instead of rationalizing their actions (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In this study,

staff members of color were able to share parts of their experience through interviews, which gave them the opportunity to express any oppression they faced during their work experience. This study also provided staff members the opportunity to suggest ways in which PWIs could better support their staff members of color.

### **Synthesis of Research**

Research that explores the experiences of minoritized faculty and staff members find multiple factors that impact the type of experience they have on campus. These factors include campus climate, difficulties faced, and levels of satisfaction. This section will explore these factors more closely in order to understand what is currently known about the experiences of faculty and staff members of color.

#### **Campus Climate**

Campus climate has been found to affect the views of faculty and staff members of color in regards to their department and university's commitments to diversity. In a study conducted by Watson, Williams, and Derby (2005), they found that "administrators perceive the racial climate to be more hostile, separated, exclusive, and conservative, while faculty and students perceive the climate to be more friendly, integrated, inclusive and liberal" (p. 84). This finding represented the thoughts of administrators without consideration of race or ethnicity. This specific distinction between staff and faculty highlights that the experiences for each group are different and should be studied separately. Although perceptions of campus climate have been studied, Chang (2000) depicted in his study how actions of hate speech committed towards various minoritized groups across the country can also affect a campus climate. Negative campus climates are perpetuated through the dismissive behavior of White faculty and staff members to the existence of racism (Chang, 2000). Ignoring the existence of racism creates a hostile

environment for faculty, staff and students of color because it relates to the idea of colorblindness that ignores their racialized experiences. In relation to *interest convergence*, the possible resources used to change campus climate in order to improve the experience of minoritized people may also conflict with resources that support other institutional values (Chang, 2000).

In a study conducted by Mayhew, Grunwald, and Dey (2006), campus climate was measured by staff members and results were disaggregated in terms of staff demographics. Results of this study indicated that the ways in which a staff member racially identifies affects their perception of campus climate and also their perception of how much a department or institution values diversity. As stated by Mayhew, Grunwald, and Dey (2006), “Staff members of color were less likely than white staff to perceive that the campus community has achieved a positive climate for diversity” (p. 79). The authors concluded that staff members of color perceived that there were major institutional obstacles to increasing diversity on campus and had experienced or witnessed offensive behavior against marginalized groups (Mayhew et al., 2006). Negative perceptions of diversity caused staff members to feel that their departments and institution had low levels of investment into diversity. However, it was suggested that, ultimately, institutional leaders have the power to be change agents for increasing the role and value of diversity on campus (Mayhew et al., 2006). Changes to campus climates can aid in making a better environment for minoritized individuals but occupational difficulties should be assessed as well.

### **Difficulties Faced**

There is limited research on the specific difficulties staff members of color face in their roles; however, some similarities between faculty and staff members in this area while reviewing

the literature. Besides the racism and discrimination faced by minoritized individuals on campus, there were four specific obstacles identified throughout the literature that faculty members of color face in their roles: lack of respect, isolation, overburdened, and lack of mentors.

**Lack of respect.** Faculty of color commonly report the lack of the respect they receive from both students and colleagues (Patton & Catching, 2009). In those situations, students challenge the authority and expertise of faculty members of color while in the classroom (Patton & Catching, 2009). The issues students have with their instructors are usually reported to senior administrators or faculty members instead of being addressed directly with the faculty member in question (Stanley, 2006). According to Antonio (2003), many White students view faculty of color as “affirmative action hires” (p. 16) and therefore perceive them as illegitimate members of faculty. In addition, colleagues sometimes devalue the research of faculty members of color as not important or tenure-worthy due to their scholarly areas of expertise being perceived as not fitting the traditional research canon (Jayakumar et al., 2009; Lee, 2011).

**Isolation.** Being minoritized at a PWI can lead to feelings of otherness and isolation (Osajima, 2009). Faculty members of color described their presence as tokenized in their field because of underrepresentation and others being unwelcoming (Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). A study focused on the experiences of African American faculty members also described isolation in terms of marginalization. Allen and fellow researchers (2000) stated that marginalization on campuses reduces access to networks, resources, and experiences necessary for success. Both of these factors caused faculty members of color to feel isolated and unsupported in their work environments (Jayakumar et al., 2009).

**Overburdened.** Besides completing their official work requirements, faculty members of color feel stress from unofficial duties placed upon them (Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999).

These duties usually consist of mentoring students of color or participating in committee work within their departments (Stanley, 2006). Faculty members of color take on greater teaching, mentoring, service, and administrative/committee responsibilities than do White faculty (Jayakumar et al., 2009; Osajima, 2009). Staff member of colors may face these same stressors, as they take on responsibility in each of those areas and work with students more directly in non-academic situations.

**Lack of mentors.** Mentors are important for faculty and staff members of color in order to help them navigate PWIs (Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). Marcus (2000) found mentors helped new staff understand the organizational culture of a university. However, in this study it was discovered that most staff of color do not experience this type of mentor relationship. Patton and Catching (2009) found that African American faculty, specifically, found that the mentorship they obtained from White superiors was less beneficial because their mentors could not relate to their circumstances or provide substantial feedback. As mentioned by Turner and colleagues (1999), successful mentoring relationships can help retain staff members, especially when the relationships focus on personal and professional development.

### **Levels of Satisfaction**

Faculty and staff members of color report having low levels of job satisfaction based on various factors. In a qualitative study, Marcus (2000) found that student affairs professionals believe they have found a good area of work, however, women of color specifically felt less satisfied and unfulfilled from work. Marcus also found that faculty and staff of color were unsatisfied with their positions due to the quality of supervision and socioemotional issues. Over 70% of staff members of color gave extremely low rankings when it came to the quality of supervision they receive (Marcus, 2000). Another study by Pololi, Evans, Gibbs, Krupat,

Brennan, and Civian (2013) focused on minoritized faculty members in medicine. The authors found that minoritized faculty members were less likely to be satisfied in their positions in comparison to their White counterparts. Both the Marcus and Pololi et al.'s studies found that these levels of satisfaction were also due to low promotion rates that could have possibly been based on favoritism within the department.

### **Literature Review Summary and Conclusion**

Faculty of color face many difficulties in their role such as lack of respect or mentorship in which can be inferred as also the same experience of staff members of color. Due to these difficulties experienced by staff and faculty members of color, they report having low job satisfaction and low quality of supervision. Accompanied with the burden of extra work from committee involvement and mentoring relationships with students of color on campus, faculty and staff members of color feel that they hold greater responsibilities than White faculty or staff members. White faculty and staff members also perceive campus climate differently than minoritized faculty and staff members in which helps perpetuate negative campus climates due to dismissive behavior. Each study reviewed leads to the conclusion that universities are lacking in their efforts to retain their faculty and staff of color once hired. White faculty and staff members experience smaller workloads, less classroom difficulties, and more opportunities for professional growth or promotion within a university. The differences in the experiences of White and minoritized faculty members are continuously depicted through the literature; however, more research needs to be conducted in order to explore the particular experiences of minoritized staff members.