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A student-run, open-access journal, the Journal of Critical Scholarship on Higher Education and Student Affairs provides a venue for international, interdisciplinary scholarship that examines higher education and student affairs through the explicit use of critical frameworks. The journal strives to provide meaningful, intentional, and actionable scholarship that can effect change on and with campus and community, understanding their interdependence and interrelated nature. As such, this journal seeks to serve the promotion of justice in “openhanded and generous ways to ensure freedom of inquiry, the pursuit of truth and care for others” (Loyola University Chicago, n.d.).

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Cobretti D. Williams
Editor In Chief, JCSHESA
Loyola University Chicago

Readers, Scholars, and Members of the JCSHESA Community,

Since the inception of our Journal in early 2015, the central goal was and continues to be a firm commitment to the publication of critical, progressive scholarship in higher education and student affairs. Fortunately over the years, authors, scholars, and community members have chosen time and time again to collaborate with JCSHESA to produce actionable research for practice. Even in the midst of our current socio-political climate, instead of limiting the voice of our Journal, we seek to amplify these voices at the height of what has been a tumultuous time for colleges and universities during the Trump-era Administration. As such, we bring you our timely second special issue: Resilience, Resistance, and Reclamation in the Trump-Era of Higher Education.

In service of our mission and this particular special issue, we choose to highlight stories, narratives, and experiences from the margins of higher education. Specifically, this issue centers on the prevalent areas of policy and practice in higher education impacted by the political actions of the federal, state, and local governments of the United States. Over the last few months, the Editorial Board, reviewers, and myself have worked hard to curate a collection of empirical articles, scholarly essays, and artistic pieces that convey the myriad ways students, faculty, and administrators find ways to resist, persist, and reclaim their right to equity in U.S. colleges and universities. Furthermore, by including non-traditional modes of “academic knowledge” such as poems, paintings, and drawings, we actively critique hegemonic systems of knowledge production in the academy and hopefully leave room for readers of this special issue to interpret, view, and gain consciousness of these narratives from different angles. Though not all pieces included in this issue are indicative of all the problems faced by higher education, we instead aim to offer a small glimpse into the reality of the many that are rarely seen, heard, or validated.

As the Editor in Chief of this Journal, I cannot be more excited to share the hard work of the authors, reviewers, and board members that went into this issue. I am thankful for their knowledge, efforts, and unshakable commitment to equity and justice for others. If there is one wish I have for readers of this special issue, and JCSHESA as a whole, it is to embrace the beauty and struggle you find between the methods, critical frameworks, and positionalities in this issue. Furthermore, I hope readers find the inspiration to resist, persevere, and reclaim the educational experience you deserve. I thank you again for reading our special issue.

In Solidarity,
Cobretti D. Williams

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I

stitutions of higher education are sites of political and social contestation (Groux & Groux, 2004). With a history steeped in exclusion, segregation, political unrest, and glacial-paced progress, it is no surprise that educators within higher education continue to experience and illuminate issues, such as racism, colonization, and identity-based harm. The imperialistic “establishment of U.S. higher education is deeply rooted in racism/White supremacy, the vestiges of which remain palpable" (Patton-Davis, 2016, p. 317), particularly under the divisiveness of today’s presidential administration. The increasing familiarity of hate crimes, microaggressions, land acquisition, and identity-based violence on today’s college campuses reinforces the pervasive and persistent nature of racism and colonization in educational environments (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). These conditions and their systemic counterparts result in an abundance of deleterious effects for students, faculty/staff, and institutions alike (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013; Goldrick-Rab, S., Kelchen, R. & Houle, J. 2014; Hamer & Yang, 2015; Pollock, 2008; Shotton, Lowe, & Waterman, 2013; Solorzano & Yosso, 2000). Knowing this, leaders within higher education must prepare to meet these realities directly should they wish to succeed and serve the communities they lead. 

Association Leadership and Priorities

To prepare students and staff for navigating diverse challenges, educators often rely on the direction, guidance, and thought leadership produced via professional associations. These associations serve as spaces for professional development, growth, and learning. They also shape the norms and practices within higher education by sponsoring seminal research, informing graduate preparation curricula (e.g., the use of the ACPE/NSPACM professional competencies), and defining standards for successful practice (American College Personnel Association & National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, 2015; Evans & Reason, 2001; Nuss, 1993). As such, those involved in professional associations play a crucial role in determining the priorities of higher education.

In the field of student affairs, these priorities have historically reflected a commitment to student learning, holistic student development, and student success. Fundamental, association-sponsored publications, including the The Student Personnel Point of View (American Council on Education, 1937; American Council on Education, 1949), The Student Learning Imperative (American College Personnel Association, 1996), and Learning Reconsidered and Learning Reconsidered 2 (Keeling, 2004; Keeling, 2006), enthusiastically support these pragmatic priorities and reinforce the consistent preparation and professionalization of student affairs professionals. While both important and necessary for informed and grounded practice, the priorities of higher education associations must broaden to address the present-day realities of racism and colonization. Without a commitment to racial justice and decolonization, commitments to student learning, development, and success will only serve to perpetuate opportunity gaps and status quo learning environments within the academy.

This work has not been realized within educational practice and scholarship. Veritably, recent scholarship has affirmed the ways in which educational research has actively ignored, subverted, or reinforced the effects of dominant and oppressive ideologies (Harper, 2012; Patel, 2016). It is time to reimagine our commitments within higher education. As educators and scholars seek to meet the needs of an ever-diversifying student body, facing an ever-increasing barrage of settler-logic and racialized harm, it is time for professional associations and those involved in these organizations to adopt a new and critical lens through which to view, sponsor, and advance research, practice, and priorities.

Although few research exists on the role of educators and their involvement in professional associations extending beyond historical accounts or the value involvement plays in socialization and career advancement (Chernow, Cooper, & Winston, 2003; Gardner & Barnes, 2007; Young, 1993), we believe such settings are prime locations from which to explore the experiences and potential for critical association leadership. By invoking an applied critical leadership framework among association leaders (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2013; 2012), educators stand to oppose status-quo leadership within the field’s professional associations. Rather than maintain business-as-usual approaches, association leaders can pivot away from passe practices, and instead, boldly advance strategic priorities addressing the exigent and harmful realities racism and colonization impart within campuses.

Purpose

The purpose of this article is to explore what critical association leadership looks like using the authors’ own experience within ACPA-College Student Educators International, as we embarked on employing a Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization within the association beginning in 2016. As members of the association’s governing board and assembly leadership, both authors hold power and opportunity to employ critical leadership initiatives, each through their unique and varying social identities. As both a black, cisgender, straight, able-bodied man, and a white, cisgender, gay, able-bodied woman, our collective positionalities inform our employment as both a faculty member and practitioner, our understanding of critical association leadership,
and the ways in which we lead. Our commitment to ACPA spans over 25 combined-years of membership and affirms our belief in the potential of the association to enact social change and impact the field of higher education.

By centering racial justice, which we define as “reducing the oppression of communities of color at the intersections of their identities” (ACPA, 2016, para. 1) and decolonization, that is, the “reparation of Indigenous land and life” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 1), both authors attempt to shift organizational norms within association practices and employ strategies aligned with the emergent theory of critical applied leadership. We do so through broadening dialogues about racial healing and self-care, engaging the tensions surrounding education on whiteness, and unabashedly striving to name and situate racial justice at the intersections of their identities, “embracing the oppression of communities of color at the intersections of their identities” (ACPA, 2016, para. 1) and the ways in which we lead. Our commitment to ACPA spans over 25 combined-years of membership and affirms our belief in the potential of the association to enact social change and impact the field of higher education.

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ing entries via email following their composition, and then responding in kind; thereby, mimicking a de-
layed, yet powerful dialogue. The tenets of critical ap-
plied leadership provided focus to our reflections and
served as a mirror through which to view our work.
Each author spent significant time in both personal
reflection and dialogue with each other as a result of
this back-and-forth technique. The resulting dia-
logue offered both authors a deeper understanding of
critical association leadership and pushed forward our
own commitments to continuing this work.

Stephen composed the first story when reflecting on
ACPA’s initial release of the Strategic Imperative for
Racial Justice.

Stephen’s Story as ACPA President, 2017-18

“How could I have not known? I mean, how could I have not known? I felt so stupid, embarrassed, and alone.
I feel ashamed.” These four sentences reflect my internal self-talk following a conversation I had with an ACPA
member who identifies as Native American where this
person shared why racial justice does not reflect his ex-
periences and how the Imperative was silencing his body
and identity as Native. In an effort to understand, I asked
this person to share more about his experiences and
immediately felt guilt over asking someone to provide
this labor for me. This person painstakingly took time
to explain the history of colonization and politzation
among Native Peoples and suggested a reading for me
to learn more. I left this conversation so downtrodden.
I also felt defensive. “My intent was not to leave out the
other communities based on the educational leaders’
identities as perceived through a CRT lens” (p. 5). Char-
acteristics inherent in this framework include a leader’s
willingness to engage in critical conversations, lead in
unconventional or new ways, honor all members of their constituency, make empirical contributions and
add authentic research-based information to aca-
demic discourse about underserved groups, and use
consciousness-building as a preferred strategy for deci-
sion-making (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012).
The theoretical frameworks (i.e., transformational leadership, critical pedagogy, CRT) informing applied critical
leadership can be found below in Figure 1.1.

These frameworks, explored in greater detail below,
guide and underlie the practice of critical applied
leadership. The resulting outcome of adopting this
perspective is described more fully by Santamaria and
Santamaria (2012).

This conceptualization pushes educational leaders’
thinking about leadership for social justice toward
thinking about leadership practice as viewed through the lens of critical race theory. This “thinking” about leadership practice will eventu-
ally result in critical applied leadership. Critical appli-
ced leadership is the emancipatory practice of choosing to address educational issues and chal-
lenges using a critical race perspective to enact context-specific strategies and responses to power, domi-
nation, access, and achievement imbalances, resulting in improved academic achievement for learners.

To begin our own “thinking” about critical applied
leadership and extend these concepts within the

Our Operational Truths
Following the revision of the Strategic Imperative to
be inclusive of decolonization, we determined the
need to develop some assumptions to guide our work.
Our goal was not to engage in arguments or debates
with colleagues about whether racism and coloniza-
tion were real, but instead, to take these as the normal,
 everyday experiences of people of color and Native
Peoples. As such, ACPA (2016) developed the following Operational Truths:
1. All forms of oppression are linked.
2. Racism and colonization are real, present, enduring,
intersectional, and systemic forms of oppression.
3. Racism and colonization have informed the expe-
rience of all of us in higher education.
4. Advocacy and social change require us to work
to dismantle racism and colonization in higher
education.
5. Our collective education, research and scholar-
ship, advocacy, and capacity will create positive
change in higher education.
6. We believe in and have hope for our individual
capacity, desire, and drive to grow, learn, and
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change within professional associations.

These operational truths, our guiding statement, and
a unified commitment to advancing our Imperative
pushed us forward and shifted our focus toward the enactment of these priorities. The work
had only just begun.

Overview of Critical Leadership Perspectives
The above overview of ACPA’s Strategic Imperative for
Racial Justice and Decolonization serves to contextual-
ize and situate one example of what we will hereafter
terminate as critical applied leadership. This work and
theoretical discussion that follows, is an imperfect, yet
illustrative, example of the ways in which association
leaders can make use of critical perspectives to realize
their agency, question taken-for-granted practice,
parameters, and lead in new ways in order to advance social
change within professional associations.

At present, it is unlikely most leaders view their pro-
fessional involvement through a critical perspective.
And yet, the majority of educators pursue association
involvement in some capacity throughout the course of
their career. As educators and scholars seek to meet
the needs of an ever-diversifying student body, facing
ever-increasing harm, we can no longer view our
professional association to be static, unprogressive, ahistori-
cal, career-serving, or environmentally neutral. Conse-
quently, the below discussion offers a different per-
spective, pushing educators to view their involve-
ment, leadership, and contributions to professional
associations critically, and with an eye toward liberato-
ry change.

An increasing number of frameworks exist from
which to view leadership from a critical perspective
(Dugan, 2017). A review of these frameworks is
beyond the scope of this article, however, many
characteristics within these frameworks inform the
forthcoming discussion.

Indeed, our hope is that the below discussion,
focused on applied critical leadership, offers readers
new tools and considerations for practice. Readers
are encouraged to use these concepts alongside
traditional leadership theories, recognizing that the utilization
of multiple frameworks is often most effective when
instituting change (Dugan, 2017; Kezar, 2013).

Applied Critical Leadership

Applied critical leadership, as outlined by Santamaria
and Santamaria (2012), is an emergent theoretical
framework through which leaders can view their in-
volvement and leadership in professional associations.
The framework is built upon the theoretical founda-
tions and principles found within transformational
leadership and critical pedagogy as viewed through
Critical Race Theory (CRT) and/or Tribal Critical Race
Theory (Tribal Crit). The framework is designed by
Santamaria and Santamaria (2012) as a “strengths-
based model of leadership practice where educational
leaders consider the social context of their educational communities and empower individual members of
their constituency, make empirical contributions and
add authentic research-based information to aca-
demic discourse about underserved groups, and use
consciousness-building as a preferred strategy for deci-
sion-making (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012).
The theoretical frameworks (i.e., transformational leadership, critical pedagogy, CRT) informing applied critical
leadership can be found below in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1. Theoretical Framework Underlying Applied Critical Leadership (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012, p. 8)
context of ACPA’s Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization, we start by reflecting on our experiences by means of exploring key principles of transformational leadership, critical pedagogy, and CRT/Tribal Crit.

Exploring Principles of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is driven by key principles relating to a leader’s ability to engage and empower people to go above and beyond within their organizations or institutions. This kind of leadership requires leaders to role model the behaviors they seek among their members, maintain a focus on the redistribution of power, prioritize transparency in their leadership, and focus on educational change (Bass, 1985; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012). This approach to leadership is inspiring, collaborative, and supportive. “To this end, transformational leadership has a moral imperative wherein leaders aim to destroy old ways of life to make ways for new ways of life, while articulating vision and values to keep empowered followers on a unified path” (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012, p. 3).

The below dialogue explores principles of transformational leadership within the context of ACPA’s early adoption of the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization:

ACPA connections (Rachel). After the Governing Board decided to adopt the Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization, I was left with many questions about what came next. What did racial justice and decolonization look like in ACPA? Did we have resources to support this work? What types of work should be prioritized? How should we share this with our members? And most importantly, where did we start? I felt energized and inspired by what I believed to be a necessary change within our association and at the same time unsure of the steps to come. I knew that as an association, we had a monumental task ahead of us. We were centering something new and some members were sustaining a commitment to our mission, vision, and values. The nuances of communicating ACPA’s Imperative, nonetheless, modeling this work would be complicated and would not doubt require time, effort, and patience.

If we expected our members and entity groups to work towards racial justice and decolonization, I knew it was critical for us to model the way. Yet, as a young, white, gay, cis-gender woman serving this association, I felt almost at a loss about how to begin. I just knew I had to do something. “Doing something” became my mantra of sorts as we moved into the first few months of implementing this imperative. I volunteered to craft timelines, joined reading groups, and facilitated focus-groups at our annual convention. I tried to say yes to as much as I could. I knew I couldn’t sit back. I had to do something.

Little did I know this would also become my mantra when working with ACPA members, particularly white members, as they struggled with similar questions about “what to do?” The Imperative urged members to act, and yet, many white members didn’t know (and still don’t know) where to start. They wanted a checklist, a roadmap, a guide, and expectations. I’ll admit, I wanted these, too, yet I knew they didn’t exist. If they did, we would have solved racism and colonization a long time ago (or at least I hope so).

As a board, we began to name this tension, remaining transparent in our thinking, communications, and conversations. We needed to be unified and remain clear about our intentions. While a step-by-step guide to racial justice and decolonization didn’t exist, we believed action and progress were possible. The Imperative, as written, called us to act, urged us to act, and will impact us to act. We simply needed to start by doing something. Naming race. Talking about it. Reading about decolonization. Showings up for a webinar. Something.

ACPA connections (Stephen). As vice president and then president of ACPA as we moved this Imperative forward, I felt an immense pressure to get it right. I knew that given my blackness, folks would be looking at me for the answers. And I felt this immense pressure to not mess up, knowing that the stakes were high. If I messed up, it would give the resisters evidence to prove that this Imperative was flawed from the beginning. As a community, we held each other accountable. And so during our early conversations, I always emphasized to our members, particularly color and Native members, I appreciate how often I see myself and others come back to the table to re-engage, reimage, and reinforce our original commitments.

Each time one of our members calls to question a process, shares a new resource, or thinks differently about how to carry out an annual task under the Imperative, I find myself encouraged and empowered to take another step. Modeling the way and ushering forward change are not static events within critical association leadership, rather they are ongoing and require time, energy, and risk-taking. Creating something new and reimagining new ways of doing are collective tasks that necessitate individual engagement from the broadest cross-sections of our communities. Thus, to lead in transformational ways, we cannot go at this alone. We all must do something.

Exploring Practices of Critical Pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is set upon the belief that education can be liberatory and emancipatory. These concepts, reflective of Paulo Freire’s (1970) Pedagogy of the Oppressed, support the idea that education can give rise to a critical consciousness and disrupt structures of power and domination. Within educational settings, Giroux noted: “critical pedagogy is concerned with restructuring traditional relationships in learning communities to a point where new knowledge, grounded in collective experiences of teaching and learning community members, is produced through meaningful dialogue” (as cited in Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012, p. 4).

Both critical pedagogy and transformational leadership attend to the value of collaborative relationships, social context, and the redistribution of power.

The below dialogue explores practices of critical pedagogy within the context of ACPA’s Governing Board Retreat in November 2016 (during which the Imperative was initially created) and ACPA’s July 2017 Leadership Meeting (during which the Imperative was shared with all ACPA entity leaders):

ACPA connections (Rachel). We began this dialogue at the aforementioned November 2016 retreat. In this space, we engaged fully, authentically, and even sometimes cautiously. We had not built trust with each other yet, and so we stumbled, were silent, and unsure of what to say at times. Some people left the space full of emotion and needing to reflect on their thoughts, and yet we continued in the messiness. Dialogue was such a central component of our process. We had to resist the urge to be right and view others as wrong. We needed to seek new understanding about this Imperative and embrace new language. It was risky to announce this new Imperative to members, for fear of immediate critiques or getting it “wrong.” And yet, we needed to think differently about...
The work of racial justice and decolonization is broad, ongoing, multifaceted, and situated amid the overlapping spheres of our sociopolitical contexts and identities. As a white educator, I have a choice about whether or not to adopt a CRT and Tribal Crit lens. And yet, my involvement in ACPA has reminded me of the necessity of making this choice. As such, I know it is critical for me to reflect, re-examine, and uplift the stories, voices, and truths reflective of these theories. To do otherwise, is to relinquish my agency and accept the status quo. I would rather align myself with change.

ACPA connections (Stephen). Stories, stories, so many stories. Stories of pain, of hurt, of violence, of vulnerability. Stories of living in bodies viewed as dangerous, as hypervisible, and even as invisible. Rachel mentioned hearing stories — so many stories. How could I not reflect on my own stories? I needed to hear stories of those with whom I am less familiar — in this case, stories from our Native members. Tribal Crit and CRT are not just theories. Stories are theoretical and vice versa. These theories developed out of a need to hear stories that are often not heard in our white, superracist, patriarchal, colonial culture.

As a black person, I, too, have a choice about whether or not to adopt a CRT and Tribal Crit lens. It was not until later that I realized these truths so closely reflected principles within CRT and Tribal Crit. Despite my naiveté at the time, I’m glad they did. This further grounded my understanding, gave credence to the collective understanding of our organization, and alerted me to the tools available to me as I shifted from “doing something,” to determining what “something” could matter the most.

Emerging from CRT, Tribal Critical Race Theory (Tribal Crit) focuses on the complex and political nature of relationships between both Indigenous and governmental entities. While CRT serves as a framework and in itself, it does not address the specific needs of Tribal Peoples because it does not address Indigenous liminality as both legal/political and racialized beings or the step of colonization (McKinley & Brayboy, 2005, p. 429). Thus, Tribal Crit principles focus on ideas such as the endemic nature of colonization, the harmful impact of governmental policies on Indigenous people, and the customs, beliefs, and knowledge held by Native people (McKinley & Brayboy, 2005). Such theories and approaches are necessary additions to CRT (see also: Latina/o Critical Race Theory; Stefancic, 1997) that educators wish to challenge power structures inherent in racist and colonization and view leadership through these lenses.

The dialogue below explores principles of CRT and Tribal Crit both during and following ACPAs July 2017 Leadership Meeting:

ACPA connections (Rachel). I started to hear stories. On the main stage at ACPAs Presidential Address, in conference rooms during focus groups, and at the hotel bar during our annual July Leadership training...I heard stories. Powerful stories giving voice to the individual and collective pain, struggle, and inequities faced by my Native colleagues and colleagues of color. These stories were bold, and they were brave. These stories and their storytellers named the realities of race, racism, colonization, and imperialism both in our institutions and in our association. While the stories were new to me, I have no doubt they were all too familiar to them.

These stories were truths and these truths gave rise to a list of six truths written by our Governing Board, thereby grounding our focus and situating our understanding of the work to come. We believed in the endemic nature of racism and colonization, its harmful impact on higher education, and our capacity to enact change.

Aho & Quaye: Applied Critical Leadership (CONTINUED)

how we related to each other and modeled that. We were concerned with fundamentally reshaping society to be more inclusive of people of color and Native Peoples. As such, we needed to engage with each other first and build that trust.

ACPAs connections (Rachel). After our November retreat, I treat, I knew that this group represented only a handful of our total membership. There was a lot of work and trust to be built across our association. Within ACPA, these efforts started at our annual summer leadership meeting. Here, not only our Board, but all ACPA entity leaders would gather to learn about and begin the work associated with our Imperative. To say this was a “make or break” moment would be an understatement. If we had any chance of moving this imperative forward, we needed the full support of all our association leaders. To begin, we started with dialogue. Rather than create a step-by-step action plan, talk about assessing our success, or ruminate about whether or not this was the direction we should head, we paused, and turned to face one another. Before all other things, we engaged in dialogue. As Rachel pointed out, there seemed to be a sense of urgency to move quickly. And the very colonialist and racist structures we were seeking to dismantle often required us to build relationships, invest time, and figure out what was happening before developing solutions that were not grounded in fully understanding the problem.

Exploring Tenets of Critical Race Race
not to adopt a Tribal Crit lens. I can choose to center only my blackness and not see my other dominant identities as a cisgender, straight, educated, able-bodied person. The times I have done that, though, I have fallen short of what a decolonizing, intersectional lens means. And so, I push myself to move beyond my lack of knowledge and learn. I move from my awareness to action. In the hearing of stories and doing something with those stories, I honor the labor of the storytellers.

ACPA connections (Rachel). What do I do with the stories that others so graciously and bravely shared? Much like Stephen, I also asked myself what I needed to do in order to honor these stories and the unpaid labor that so often accompanied them? Surely, it would be easier to simply listen, nod my head, and then move on, but moving on in this context moving back to the way things always had been done and reinforcing the oppressive forces I sought to resist. As an aspiring critical leader within our association I committed myself to leading differently, speaking differently, behaving differently, and engaging differently in my role.

I wanted to employ an applied critical leadership lens to my work and choose change. So instead of simply nodding and smiling, I chose instead to raise questions, read outside my white-washed bookshelf, investigate new topics within my doctoral research, put forward new policies within my professional practice, and make way for ACPA’s Strategic Imperative to [do something] to take up space within my day to day life. Alongside the work of many others in ACPA, I aim to address what has long been pushed aside in the history of our scholarship and practice. Instead, I aim to center racial justice and decolonization, as a way to advance social justice, equity, and new possibilities for practice. To those of you reading...I ask you to join me. I ask you to join us.

Putting it All Together

The above dialogue offers a deconstructed demonstration of applied critical leadership's three underlying frameworks (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012). While separated in text for ease of understanding and alignment with the applied critical leadership model, the interplay among transformational leadership principles and critical pedagogy practices as viewed through a CRT/Tribal Crit lens were very much interwoven throughout each of these experiences. As authors, we could have explored any of our stories through all three frameworks, and our hope is that through our conversational progression, readers can also identify the intentionally blurred, co-constructed nature of these pieces. The resulting outcome, as seen through our examples, re-emphasize the key characteristics of applied critical leadership, including a willingness to engage in critical conversations, lead in innovative new ways, honor members of their constituencies, make empirical contributions, and lead by example through the strengths of our social identities and positionalities (Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012).

Critiques of Applied Critical Leadership

Adopting an applied critical leadership framework necessitates that people maximize opportunities for change and take risks to advance principles of social justice. In addition to the characteristics highlighted above, Santamaria and Santamaria (2012) also encourage leaders to build trust with resistant constituents, engage in interest convergence through consensus-building, and remain conscious of fulfilling identity-based stereotypes. Such recommendations, while not without their merit in particular situations, may lean too heavily on satisfying white constituents and unfairly imply that the impetus for change rests more squarely on the labor and efforts of people of color and Native Peoples. Although Santamaria and Santamaria address this concern by stating that leadership efforts should be shared, perhaps the call for white professionals to enact critical leadership within their work is not strong enough. Thus, our assumption is that such efforts for critical applied leadership be enacted, in full, by all professional association leaders. We provide implications and recommendations for practice for doing so below.

Implications for Practice and Conclusion

As noted within this article, it is impossible to compile a step-by-step guide that wholly captures the work of racial justice and decolonization in professional associations, and yet, this work is needed now more than ever. The effects of racism and colonization continue to persist and the meaningful impacts are impressed upon students, faculty, and staff members. ACPA’s Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization represents a powerful call to reframe and recognize the centrality of racism and settler colonialism in higher education, and to work toward restorative and transformative justice in all facets of affairs of profession” (Poon, 2018, p. 18). As leaders in higher education, and involved members of higher education associations, we must prepare to address these realities and demonstrate applied critical leadership.

The work of racial justice and decolonization is broad, ongoing, multifaceted, and situated amid the overlapping spheres of our sociopolitical contexts and identities. While numerous opportunities exist for future educators to explore this type of critical association work, its utilization in practice is needed now. Thus, our hope is that the initial work of ACPA and our individual reflections within this article make visible new pathways for the utilization of Santamaria and Santamaria’s (2012) applied critical leadership framework. With hope, these pathways prompt educational leaders to enact their association involvement differently. Our professional associations are “sites of opportunity” whereby possibility exists to “alter human probabilities” (Katznelson, 2017, p. 184). Whether involvement takes place as a conference attendee, committee member, fundraiser, volunteer, presenter, discussant, or board member, each role affords professionals with some agency for change. The unique and diverse ways in which association involvement takes place allows for leaders to advance racial justice and decolonization through a variety of pathways, to alter probabilities, and advance justice.

While power and dominance undoubtedly show up in professional association work, we assert the belief that each person has power to recognize their agency via applied critical leadership in some way. Whether done by choosing to engage in critical dialogue, name racism and colonization when it appears in association practices, revisit conference keynotes to lift up new voices, submit a program that views practice through a CRT/Tribal Crit lens, secure funding to sponsor scholarship around racial justice and decolonization, or advance board level conversations to center racial justice and decolonization at the association-wide level, we urge professionals to choose something. Do something that matters, do something that disrupts the status quo, do something that realigns the priorities of our field with the realities of our world, and that gives way to new and more just practices. Do that kind of something.

*References: Can be found at the end of this special issue.

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You Get What You Deserve:

The Struggle for Worthiness of International Students and Workers

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Late January 2017, never once having talked about anything other than mundane daily activities and the weather, my mother sheepishly asked about American xenophobia and racism. My mother heard a news segment about Donald Trump’s ascendance to the presidency; she wants to know how much he actually does not like immigrants and whether he actually “makes racism happen.” I remember her asking, eight years too late, after investing most of my family’s income to make sure that I have set your mind to be, and to understand “rights” (as in individual rights) requires grappling with worthiness, deservingness, and responsibility.

Colloquially synonymous, “worthy of” and “deserving of” both denote somebody’s entitlement to certain things, treatments, or services. However, although worthiness is internal and sacred to the person, deservingness results from external behavior. For example, I do not have to do anything to be worthy of human dignity or my parents’ love—that worth is inherent in my being. On the other hand, to deserve a promotion, I need to work hard and show that I am appropriately prepared for school and services, and then go home so that a new wave of workers without rights, or the possibility of citizenship and voting, can come in (Lakoff & Ferguson, 2006, pp. 8–9). Paying tax and without suffrage, international students and workers by definition do not have representation, yet debates about our lives happen daily, always in reference to something or somebody else. Will temporary workers take American jobs? Are the foreign students studying bioengineering secretly creating biological weapons? Even when I proved my deservingness of the visa, the rule of the game changed arbitrarily; nobody is safe.

While I continually manipulate my assets and resources in a supposed meritocracy to get to the American dream, I painfully live and learn the reality that such meritocracy is a myth.

Systemic disempowerment could continue to hit until people have nothing left to fight with. In March 2017, one month before the opening date of the H-1B visa petition and four months before the end of my legal status, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) announced that starting April 3, it would suspend premium processing for all H-1B petitions, creating a backlog in processing time and respect our country.

When I prove my deservingness of the visa, the rule of the game changed arbitrarily; nobody is safe.
Trump signed an executive order titled “Buy American and Hire American” that instructed federal agencies to closely regulate policies that granted work authorization such as the H-1B visa, which is the visa I am on. Multiple different American institutions—the university international offices, the U.S. consulate providing the visa, the Department of Homeland Security at the airport, and USCIS approving my legal status—exist to check for my deservingness to come and be here. The underlying assumption is that my legality is intimately dependent on my deservingness of and productivity within the American economy. As a student affairs professional, I still feel like a liar when affirming many international students of the beauty of diversity and their inherent worthiness of belonging and success.

One reason that many college officials use to convince international students and domestic students of the value of international students on campus is cultural diversity. That is, these international students will bring their cultures and contribute to the larger campus. I cringe at questions about “my culture” because the story is complicated. My Vietnamese story is not of an ideologically distant exotic land with a strange culture stuck in the past. My mother wholeheartedly believed in the “land of the superior” (in her words) so imperial supremacy. Speaking English without a strong accent, I am not fluent in popular cultural references, praised as the “translated” copies of the colonizer’s cultural habits, assumptions, institutions, and values” (Andreotti, 2011, p. 26). Bhattacharya (1984) conceptualization of the “mimic men” and Fanon’s (1968) “native intellectual” both have a potential path to transformative colonial resistance. McLeod (2000). Fanon’s (1968) three-phase process—unqualified assimilation, just-before-the-battle, and fighting—for the native intellectuals is helpful; yet, just as any theory is an imperfect reflection of reality, I am not sure it is applicable to me. My responsibility is to define this path for myself. I am not yet at the fighting phase where I am with my people reimagining, reinterpreting, and transforming the Vietnamese culture. That is where I would like to go.

The underlying assumption is that my legality is intimately dependent on my deservingness of and productivity within the American economy.

Since taking office President Trump has been leading America into a downward spiral. Instead of uniting everyone, he has divided us as a country. It feels as if we’re back in the 50s with racial segregation and discrimination. An example of this is the Charlottesville Rally where white supremacists went to protest the city’s plan to take down Confederate monuments. The event turned violent after protesters clashed with counter-protesters. After seeing this play out on CNN I was inspired to make an abstract representation of the event that took place during the rally as the counter-protester was attacked.
Cultivating Resilience and Resistance in Trump’s America: Employing Critical Hope as a Framework in LGBTQ+ Centers

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President Donald Trump’s infamous tweets have become almost commonplace in our current era. Every day, we wonder who he will offend, what human rights he will attempt to compromise, or who he might further marginalize. Nowhere is this as prevalent as for LGBTQ+ populations who have been oppressed historically and whose status remains precarious. For example, in July 2017, Trump (2017) tweeted, “victory cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail.” As the leader of the most powerful nation in the world, Trump has the upper hand. Under his administration, the Department of Justice is protecting taxpayer-funded federal agencies, government employees, and government contractors who legally discriminate against LGBTQ+ employees for religious reasons, and the Department of Health and Human Services is eliminating LGBTQ+ communities’ health needs from strategic plan for 2018-2022. These actions are harsh and unsettling, especially since Trump’s rhetoric and such policies give license to others to oppress and to continue to uphold a legacy of homophobia and transphobia in the United States. Since his election, we have seen a rise in hate crimes; the Southern Poverty Law Center, for example, “found 867 cases of hateful harassment or intimidation in the 10 days after the Nov. 8 election” (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016). To be clear, it is not solely Trump himself that is the problem we identify. Rather, his taking office has leveraged an ideology that oppress LGBTQ+ peoples and other minoritized bodies. His presence has awakened, catapulted, and most importantly legitimized a host of negativity in social spaces. The visibility of White Nationalists, for instance, has dominated the media in the last year, reflected in instances such as Charlottesville, Virginia or the appearance of swastikas across college campuses. This is surely not a coincidence.

It might seem then, that in such a political context, resistance and resilience would be futile. We believe, however, that just the opposite is true. This milieu necessitates response, on all fronts, now more than ever. In the space where we work, higher education, there are numerous opportunities for such efforts. One such arena is through LGBTQ+ centers on college campuses. As places that, by their very existence, disrupt the status quo, campus LGBTQ+ centers validate marginalized students and provide opportunities for their growth and support (Marine, 2011). Our current political climate, which resists diverse bodies, makes the need for such centers and their work of cultivating hope, and thereby a commitment to struggle and change, even more urgent. Resilience is a term operationalized in multiple fields; however, we employ Nicolazzo’s (2017) reconceptualization of resilience as something that one has or does (e.g., an ability) but a practice (p. 88). Formulating resilience as an action helps us to construct how LGBTQ+ centers can themselves (and can assist students) employ strategies “to overcome individual enactments of trans* oppression” (Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 88) and determine “where and with whom one can best be successful and, thus, best navigate the collegiate environment” (Nicolazzo, 2017, p. 89).

And, just as we expand resilience, we also note that the manner in which one resists can vary. We recognize resistance broadly because we wish to validate each person’s agency in resisting in this tumultuous political climate on their own terms. Resistance, then, could be voting or protesting, or it could be writing to a congressperson, or it could be sharing factual news on social media. It could also encompass a combination of these or even something different. Resistance cannot have a ‘one size fits all’ definition because people must be able to resist within their given social contexts. Furthermore, individuals must be able to step back when they need a break, when they feel overwhelmed by emotion, exhaustion, or frustration. Resistance means they still return to the cause, but it understands that battle fatigue exists as a result of a host of oppressions, such as racism, cisgenderism, or sexism. Additionally, resistance cannot be left to those who find it convenient or, conversely, to those who are most affected. It should be assumed by anyone who wants to fight against the dangerous rhetoric of Trump and his supporters and who wants to hope for a better world.

In this article, we posit that a critical hope framework (Duncan-Antrande, 2009) employed by campus centers can help foster resistance and resilience with LGBTQ+ students. While we focus on LGBTQ+ centers, this framework could be adapted to other centers that serve marginalized students. Additionally, LGBTQ+ communities’ health needs from strategic plan for 2018-2022.
centers cannot be the only campus entity to foster resilience and resistance in LGBTQ+ students. However, we recognize that by the type of work that LGBTQ+ centers engage in on a daily basis, the space created allows for centers to cultivate resiliency and resistance in LGBTQ+ students. In what follows, we explore the history of university centers for LGBTQ+ populations, describe the meaning and manifestations of critical hope, and offer five areas for critical praxis that allow for the disruption of the systemic oppression which we are witnessing today. It is our goal to demonstrate tangible ways that concerned citizens, staff, and faculty can better support university students and be agents of change in what may seem like dismal times.

LGBTQ+ centers

LGBTQ+ centers emerged after the Stonewall riots to support gay and lesbian students, and later shifted to include all diverse gender identities, expressions, and sexual orientations. The first center opened in 1971 at the University of Michigan, and today there are nearly 200 centers located at all types of institutions nationwide (Consortium of Higher Education Directors of LGBTQ+ Centers, 2018). These centers offer support to students who are experiencing turmoil or who need community (Damschroder, 2013; Marine, 2011). LGBTQ+ centers are experienced in helping students in their coming out processes and navigating the institutional bureaucracy. Students who frequent the centers also offer support to their peers, sharing strategies that have worked for them and empathizing with students’ lives. These interactions create and cultivate community amongst LGBTQ+ students and their allies. This community is important as many students, especially those from more rural areas, may not have had this type of community in their hometown.

Therefore, LGBTQ+ centers cannot show impact easily from already collected information, which impacts the ability to demonstrate their benefit to students.

LGBTQ+ rights movement had begun, but the LGBTQ+ community splintered into individual identities, which continued through the 1990s (Styker, 2008). In the 1980s and 1990s, more centers opened nationwide, mainly due to student activists (Marine, 2011). Now most centers focus on all diverse gender identities/expressions and sexual orientations. These changes signify that centers and their staff recognize that as times and political climates change, the centers must change to adapt and meet the needs of the campus community.

LGBTQ+ centers assess campus climate for LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff (Damschroder, 2013; Marine, 2011). These assessments can then be used to argue for more resources, such as staff, funds, or space. Additionally, these assessments can offer evidence about harassment or microaggressions that students, staff, and faculty experience with the goal of targeting the cause and location of these issues in order to eliminate them. Centers also conduct assessments to assist with telling their story (Damschroder, 2013). This storytelling is imperative when most institutions do not track LGBTQ+ student retention through quantitative methods like other student services units. Therefore, LGBTQ+ centers cannot show impact easily from already collected information, which impacts the ability to demonstrate their benefit to students.

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LGBTQ+ center staff also often have the opportunity to educate others on needs and concerns for the LGBTQ+ community (Marine, 2011). These opportunities manifest as ally trainings or safe zone programs, which allow for members of the campus community to learn more about terminology, privilege, and coming out and to develop inclusive teaching strategies. These types of educational initiatives create the possibility to change people’s attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals. In a recent study, canvassers went door-to-door to talk to individuals in Florida for 10 minutes and talked about what “transgender” meant and offered information on both sides of a proposed repeal of a trans* protection law (Broockman & Kalla, 2016). These conversations greatly reduced prejudice against trans* individuals in those who participated (Broockman & Kalla, 2016). Thus, by exposing heterosexual and/or cisgender individuals to more information, institutions can potentially reduce prejudice against those who are marginalized.

LGBTQ+ center staff advocate for LGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty as the de facto LGBTQ+ experts on campus. Advocacy efforts focus on changes in policies, practices, and behaviors of all members in a campus ecosystem. These vary by campus, but could include: name change policies, gender inclusive housing, and gender inclusive bathrooms. Students, and to a lesser extent, faculty and staff, expect center staff to advocate on their behalf and to amplify their voices to administrators to change policies. Institutions have a myriad of policies and procedures that govern daily business. Many of these policies and procedures were created years ago without considering the diversity of the campus community. Now, Center staff, with help from the campus community, work to fix and reconstruct these policies. We return to a fuller discussion of these types of practices below, as each stem from a particular theoretical stance—that of critical hope.

Critical Hope

Attributed to the work of Duncan-Andrade (2009), the concept of “critical hope” denotes cautious optimism and progressive action in the face of structural oppression. Duncan-Andrade outlined several forms of hope that he does not wish to forward, offering instead more realistic and achievable styles. Those that he admonished begin with hokey hope, “an individualistic up-by-your-bootstraps hyperbole that suggests if . . . youth just work hard, pay attention, and play by the rules, then they will . . . live out the ‘American dream’” (p. 182). The burden this places on a singular person is unfair, given that forces at work in institutional structures, much larger than any individual, often exist as obstacles preventing a person from reaching their potential at no fault of their own.

Mythical hope is the second form against which Duncan-Andrade (2009) warned, explaining this as the type that results when an opportunity for a certain population is won or a person from a marginalized group achieves success. This, he stated, is a “false narrative of equal opportunity emptied of its historical and political exigencies” (p. 183) and “depends on luck and the law of averages to produce individual exceptions to the tyranny of injustice” (p. 184). Grand erasures of history cannot occur simply because one person ‘makes it.’ Finally, the third type of impractical hope, hope deferred, is an extreme opposite of hokey hope. Rather than solely seeing the individual, hope deferred instead is paralyzed by systemic oppression,
Audacious hope, therefore, keenly discerns a challenging and potentially discouraging situation, such as living in the era of Trump and being a member of LGBTQ+ communities and strives for change.

Audacious hope, therefore, keenly discerns a challenging and potentially discouraging situation, such as living in the era of Trump and being a member of LGBTQ+ communities and strives for change. We now turn to specific examples of current policies and marginalized structures and explain how LGBTQ+ centers can employ the forms of critical hope that Duncan-Anrade theorized.

Critical Praxis

In this section, we posit a host of issues and actions reflective of Duncan-Anrade’s (2009) critical hope in order to facilitate students better capable of responding to their immediate local, national, and global contexts. We begin by focusing on one instance of an LGBTQ+ center that is under attack. We then explore Title IX, immigration, bathroom bills, women’s rights, and healthcare while recognizing that this list is neither exhaustive of the issues and rights targeted within this current administration nor are they completely separate. For each issue, we highlight its history and how it impacts students in LGBTQ+ centers. We then discuss how critical hope can be embodied to cultivate resilience and resistance to Trump’s oppressive rhetoric in each area.

One quick note before we discuss critical praxis: it can be easy to get trapped in what Duncan-Anrade (2009) labeled as hope deferred, described above. For some, especially those with privilege, telling others to wait it out or that it will get better is a sound solution. Practitioners might imagine that things will change in the next president’s administration. However, those who are not immediately affected cannot tell students, who are experiencing tremendous pain or concern for their safety or immigration status, that it will get better. This deferred hope is neither helpful, useful, or socially just, nor does it address the structural problems and outright hatred that LGBTQ+ students face. The mere existence of centers, as in the case of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, is considered radical by some. The existence of centers is therefore a form of audacious hope. Space on campus is important for those who need to feel heard and to share their pain with others. This LGBTQ+ community is just as important to those who need to process the hurt and struggles they may experience in the world as it is for those who are in the midst of their coming out process. No space should include those in whom we are angry or ‘disobedient’ because they often need the space the most (Duncan-Anrade, 2009).

Center Existence

As centers continue to perform their daily functions in our current political era, at least one has already come under attack. In 2016, the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UT) had the funding for its Office for Diversity and Inclusion rerouted to minority engineering scholarships by the state legislature for one year (Ohm, 2017b). Then in 2017, the UT Chancellor, Beverly Davenport, decided to hire a coordinator to lead the UT Pride Center (Ohm, 2017b). Several state lawmakers criticized this decision. Mae Beavers, a Republican gubernatorial candidate and former state senator, released a statement in which she said: ‘It is disappointing that the new Chancellor has decided to ignore the clear intent and legitimate concerns of the Tennessee Legislature which funded the Office for Diversity and Inclusion’ (Beavers & Davenport, 2017). Beavers disagreed with the diversity office’s shift to inclusive holiday parties that did not mention Santa Claus or Christmas (Ohm, 2017a). While this is one example of an LGBTQ+ center under attack, the brazen condemnation on support services in one conservative state could create a ripple effect and impact other states.

The functions of an LGBTQ+ center have long been considered vital in universities. We examine the function of an LGBTQ+ center in this context and how critical hope can be employed to facilitate students better capable of responding to their immediate local, national, and global contexts.

Prior to this Obama-era clarification, the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown expelled Seamus Johnston, a trans* man, because he used the men’s bathrooms and locker rooms (Jaschik, 2015). The judge did not believe that Title IX prohibited discrimination based on gender identity because it ‘defines federal funding (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Title IX has long been employed to ensure equity in athletics, but, more recently, policymakers issued clarifications to the policy, including how to respond to sexual assault and how to support students who are pregnant and/or are parents. In April 2014, the United States Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) issued the statement: “Title IX’s sex discrimination prohibition extends to claims of discrimination based on gender identity or failure to conform to stereotypes of femininity or masculinity, and OCR accepts such complaints for investigation” (Lhamon, 2014, p. 5). This clarification allowed for trans* students to file complaints with the OCR for investigation on whether or not an institution was in violation of Title IX.

Title IX was enacted by the federal government in the 1970s to ensure that no one would be excluded due to their sex in any education program or activity that received federal funding (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). Title IX has long been employed to ensure equity in athletics, but, more recently, policymakers issued clarifications to the policy, including how to respond to sexual assault and how to support students who are pregnant and/or are parents. In April 2014, the United States Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (OCR) issued the statement: “Title IX’s sex discrimination prohibition extends to claims of discrimination based on gender identity or failure to conform to stereotypes of femininity or masculinity, and OCR accepts such complaints for investigation” (Lhamon, 2014, p. 5). This clarification allowed for trans* students to file complaints with the OCR for investigation on whether or not an institution was in violation of Title IX.
Resilience, Resistance, & Reclamation
SPECIAL ISSUE OCTOBER 2018: Resilience, Resistance, & Reclamation

Boyd & Jeffries: Employing Critical Hope as a Framework in LGBTQ+ Centers

Immigration

Immigration, often viewed through a dichotomized lens, must be viewed as a social justice issue facing all members of society. Frequently, LGBTQ+ people are not thought of as undocumented immigrants, and thus, not in need of protection. However, there are estimated 267,000 LGBTQ+, undocumented immigrants in the United States (Gates, 2013). Immigration has become central to the Trump administration’s agenda. The focal point of the immigration agenda is to reduce the number of undocumented immigrants. Federal statute that protected them, or at least, would allow for their concerns to be heard. Socratic hope, with its focus on recognizing the intrinsic value of the individual, provides insight to acknowledging the rights of other LGBTQ+ students’ rights in education.

In early 2017, Trump’s Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, revoked the April 2015 directive on that explicitly stated that Title IX offered protections for trans* students (Holden, 2018). In mid-February 2018, the Department of Education released a new guidance outlet that it will not investigate or take action if a trans* student is not allowed to use a bathroom that aligns with their gender identity (Holden, 2018). Undoubtedly, this is a perverted interpretation of the civil rights law. Socratic hope, as Socrates (and other LGBTQ+) students’ rights in education. Socratic hope provides insight to acknowledging student feelings around loss of recognition of a federal statute that protected them, or at least, would allow for their concerns to be heard. Socratic hope, then, should encourage students by recognizing and validating their feelings around this topic. By offering students someone to listen and validate their feelings, practitioners can learn more about how to better amplify student voices when meeting with administration in hopes of changing institutional policy to be more intentional and thoughtful toward trans* student needs. In addition, practitioners can, through validat- ing students, encourage them to advocate for material change, such as institutional protections, should the state law allow. This cultivates resistance to Trump’s policies by finding local solutions when federal protections are no longer in place.

Nonetheless, it is imperative that the raw, sometimes unfathomable, often times uncomfortable truth be told. But one of the most taxing aspects of revealing these truths is that people believe we exist in a "post-racial" society.

Bathroom Bills

In recent years, so-called “bathroom bills,” or legislation attempting to regulate the facilities to which trans* individuals have access, have increased and incited much public debate. As mentioned previously, the Obama administration issued protections for trans* students under Title IX. As these students were “secured the right to use bathroom facilities consistent with their gender identities” (Rushin & Carroll, 2017, p. 8-9), a backlash occurred, evidenced by thirteen states filing suits against the federal government for its ruling, feeling that their rights were compromised and, eventually, proposals for bathroom bills emerged. Perhaps the most well-publicized of such legislation is North Carolina’s House Bill 2 (HB2) passed in 2016, which “required individuals to use the bathroom that corresponded to the sex on their birth certificate as opposed to the gender with which they identified” (Journell, 2017, p. 339). Proponents advocated that the bill would serve to protect women and children from sexual predators while opponents argued that such a policy was a violation of human rights, that “equal access to public restrooms is a fundamental right that predicates democratic participation of any kind” (Davis, 2017, p. 3). Others have noted that such laws “criminalize the trans* community” by “explicitly establishing a new criminal offense category for trans individuals who use bathrooms consistent with their gender identities” (Rushin & Carroll, 2017, p. 16).

Given the political precedent of Title IX, it would seem that these bills are in violation of the federal government’s stance. However, as noted above, the landscape was complicated by the fact that in 2016 “the Trump administration rescinded the Obama adminis- tration’s guidelines that Title IX’s sex discrimi- nation should be interpreted to include gender identi- ty discrimination” (Davis, 2017, p. 2). This decision led the Supreme Court to form a new opinion in a case in Virginia in which a high school precluded a trans male from using the bathroom that matched his gender. And, although HB2 was technically later repealed, the so-called “bathroom bills” that lawmakers reached prohibits state agencies, including public universities, from creating nondiscrimination policies. Thus, establishing protections for LGBTQ+ populations is not feasible under this guidance.

While HB2 is only one example of a bathroom bill and other states have not officially passed similar legislation, the introduction of such policies, the public support they have garnered, and the federal government’s reaction is threatening to LGBTQ+ populations at large. On college campuses, especially in states without specific policies protecting trans* individuals, using a public facility is a fearful experience for many. In Herman’s 2013 survey of “self-identified transgender people living in Washington, DC, 70% of respondents said they had been denied service, legally harassed, or physically assaulted in public restrooms” (Davis, 2017, p. 7). The fear that trans* individuals may feel, then, is therefore warranted. Furthermore, research...
has shown that trans* people may avoid using the bathroom while in public, causing serious health problems (Herman, 2013). Neither of these consequences is what we should want for our university students. How then, can LGBTQ+ centers and practitioners who work within the face of this widespread debate and against the backdrop of Trump’s legislative move? First, LGBTQ+ centers can offer all-gender bathrooms if possible, and they can help students locate across campus, mapping out where they are in relation to students’ classes. In 2016, Time magazine reported that more than 150 U.S. colleges and universities have gender inclusive restrooms on their campuses (Steinemetz, 2016). This is a positive move, and staff in centers can advocate for even more all-gender bathrooms in their campuses, since “schools are obligated to protect the safety, both physical and emotional, of all their students” (Watkins & Moreno, 2017, p. 170). This is, in essence, the cultivation of material hope—students are being provided with tangible resources they need to live productively and healthily.

As Watkins and Moreno (2017), noted, however, Sadly, many schools have no specific policy in place, relying on state legislative language, which in many cases does not protect the rights of transgender students. Schools will be better served by crafting policy using a comprehensive policy model that safeguards all students. (p. 169)

Therefore, staff in LGBTQ+ centers must amplify students’ voices and challenge institutional policies, or lack thereof, that marginalize LGBTQ+ students, working to ensure that their rights and safety are guaranteed. When it comes to bathrooms, centers can be the force that push for those facilities, rather than placing the burden entirely on students to secure their needs. As a form of audacious hope, then, staff can be assisted in navigating the complex bureaucracy often found in higher education and shown that change can occur. As a practice of resistance, challenging bathroom rights reflects one way to counter the normative structures on campus.

One final note, however, related to considering trans* individuals access to bathrooms. Davis (2017) proposed converting “current sex-segregated restrooms . . . into no-gender bathrooms” (p. 14) while Journell (2017) forwarded “using the bathroom that corresponds with their gender identity is the only truly safe option” (p. 345). Thus, there are yet decisions to be made about bathrooms on college campuses, and LGBTQ+ centers can be the leader on those, consulting with students and utilizing their feedback to inform recommended policy and construction. Such actions would be the epitome of embodying Socratic hope because they listen to the voices of those affected, empathize, and develop appropriate responses.

Healthcare

Healthcare, deemed by many to be a human right, is constantly under siege by the Trump administration and Republican congresspersons. While there are myriad issues in healthcare that impact LGBTQ+ communities, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment is one of the most salient. HIV/AIDS has long been coupled with the LGBTQ+ community. In the early 1980s, President Reagan did not acknowledge the burgeoning epidemic, and his press secretary infamously disregarded the disease in the audio documentary, When AIDS Was Funny (Calonico, 2015). The earliest cases were related to gay men, and thus were deemed not worthy of public concern (Calonico, 2015). HIV/AIDS did not only affect gay men, which was recognized later, but it nonetheless still greatly impacts the LGBTQ+ community.

At the end of 2017, the Trump administration dismissed the remaining members of the HIV and AIDS Council (Guarino, 2017). This Council has advised the White House on HIV/AIDS policy since its inception under President Clinton in 1995 (Guarino, 2017). Additionally, Trump’s administration has threatened the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which is imperative for those who receive coverage and are living with HIV/AIDS. Under ACA, individuals cannot be dropped or denied coverage because of a pre-existing health condition, such as HIV or AIDS (HIV.gov, n.d.). Additionally, the ACA required most plans to cover certain preventive services, such as HIV testing for those between the ages of 15 and 65 (HIV.gov, n.d.). According to UNAIDS (2014), worldwide women twice more likely to contract HIV. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2017) estimate that 70% of new HIV infections were among gay and bisexual men.

These statistics clearly demonstrate that HIV/AIDS is very much a LGBTQ+ issue. The Trump administration’s desire to change the ACA and dismantle the HIV and AIDS Council are direct attacks on the LGBTQ+ community. Currently, only 34 states and the District of Columbia mandate HIV education, but there is not a requirement for all of these states to be medically accurate (Guttmacher Institute, n.d.). In addition, few states require conversations around sexual orientation, and of these states, three states allow for only negative information on sexual orientation (Guttmacher Institute, n.d.). Thus, with, limited, and, sometimes false, information being taught in K-12 schools, college students may be misinformed about the necessity for HIV/AIDS testing or how HIV is contracted.

Due to this misinformation or lack of information, LGBTQ+ centers can provide education, and if necessary, work with other groups to offer preventative services. These entities should be based in audacious hope because the history of the United States is replete with oppression and injustice. HIV/AIDS is a painful reminder of the past and how little elected officials cared about LGBTQ+ communities as they were dying. Practitioners can demonstrate audacious hope by talking about this painful memory by using the numerous documentaries that either foreground HIV/AIDS or have HIV/AIDS as an important plot component. Additionally, Duncan-Andrade (2009) wrote, “Audacious hope stirs the painful path and despite the overwhelming odds against us making it down that path to change, we make the journey again and again” (p. 191). While the perilous path is eerily similar to that of years ago, there is significantly more information and medical interventions to help prevent and treat HIV/AIDS. Therefore, LGBTQ+ centers, as reflective of critical hope, can also employ material hope working when initiating new programs around safer sex, advocating for HIV/AIDS testing, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and post-exposure prophylaxis (PeP) at campus health centers, and hosting events that explain the past of HIV/AIDS. PrEP is a daily prescription medication for those who are at high risk for contracting HIV. PrEP can prevent an HIV infection. PeP is also an antiretroviral medication that one can take if they have potentially been exposed to HIV. These programs encourage hope by helping students learn more about health and wellbeing than they, most likely, would have learned in high school. They also promote resistance and resilience by allowing students to study the LGBTQ+ history and how resilient, and how often resis tant, LGBTQ+ revolutionaries were when they originally faced the HIV/AIDS crisis.

Gender-Based Violence

As illustrated with our focus on immigration, LGBTQ+ students’ identities overlap with multiple others that warrant support and advocacy. These intersectionalities also include women’s identities. President Trump’s notorious and sexually explicit comments about his treatment of women are now well known, having been publicly decried after the election in 2016. In the wake of Trump taking office, millions of people all over the country united through the Women’s March to demand, amongst others, reproductive and women’s rights. The Washington Post reported the marches were “the largest single-day demonstration in recorded U.S. history” (Chenoweth & Pressman, 2017, para. 1).

As the year unfolded, a number of related movements took flight, including the #MeToo campaign, which surfaced after multiple Hollywood actresses shared their harrowing accounts of sexual harassment by film industry officials, and Weinstein. Although begun in 2007 by Tarana Burke, a Black female, the movement gained attention particularly through White feminists. Thus rightly critiqued by women of color, #MeToo nonetheless became an average woman’s avenue for women of color and resilience by allowing for students to understand and again" (p. 191). While the perilous path is eerily similar to that of years ago, there is significantly more information and medical interventions to help prevent and treat HIV/AIDS. Therefore, LGBTQ+ centers, as reflective of critical hope, can also employ material hope working when initiating new programs around safer sex, advocating for HIV/AIDS testing, pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), and post-exposure prophylaxis (PeP) at campus health centers, and hosting events that explain the past of HIV/AIDS. PrEP is a daily prescription medication for those who are at high risk for contracting HIV. PrEP can prevent a HIV infection. PeP is also an antiretroviral medication that one can take if they have potentially been exposed to HIV. These programs encourage hope by helping students learn more about health and wellbeing than they, most likely, would have learned in high school. They also promote resistance and resilience by allowing students to study the LGBTQ+ history and how resilient, and how often resistant, LGBTQ+ revolutionaries were when they originally faced the HIV/AIDS crisis.
bosses and co-workers who not only cross boundaries but don’t even seem to know that boundaries exist. … They’ve had it with the code of going along to get along. They’ve had it with men who use their power to take what they want from women” (Zacharek, Docter, & Edwards, 2017, para. 8).

Now, the “Time’s Up” campaign, led by over 300 women in film, television, and theater, is a commitment to supporting women’s rights and has an established legal defense fund housed by the National Women’s Law Center to subsidize legal costs associated with sexual harassment suits. The initial open letter published from participants read:

Too many centers of power—from legislatures to boardrooms to executive suites and management to academia—lack gender parity and women do not have equal decision-making authority. This systemic gender-inequality and imbalance of power fosters an environment that is ripe for abuse and harassment against women. Therefore, we call for a significant increase of women in positions of leadership and power across industries. In addition, we seek equal representation, opportunities, benefits, and pay for all women workers, not to mention greater representation of women of color, immigrant women, disabled women, and lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women, whose experiences in the workforce are often significantly worse than their white, cisgender, straight peers. The struggle for women to break in, to rise up the ranks and to simply be heard and acknowledged by their peers. The struggle for women to break in, to rise up the ranks and to simply be heard and acknowledged by their peers.

Therefore, we call for a significant increase of women in positions of leadership and power across industries. In addition, we seek equal representation, opportunities, benefits, and pay for all women workers, not to mention greater representation of women of color, immigrant women, disabled women, and lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women, whose experiences in the workforce are often significantly worse than their white, cisgender, straight peers.

Case after case of sexual assault and harassment continues to emerge. Matt Lauer was fired from his twenty-year run on the Today show upon evidence of sexual misconduct and Dr. Larry Nassar, Michigan State University and USA gymnastics physician was sentenced to up to 175 years in prison for his crimes against women. Students on university campuses, as part of the general public, are witness to these atrocious stories and the movements that are ensuing as a result. Many college women are also part of the response, taking part in protests and marches. And, many have stories of their own to tell. The Bureau of Justice Statistics found in a 2016 study of nine campuses that 21% of men reported experiencing sexual assault since the beginning of their college careers, with higher rates reported by non-heterosexual college women (Krebs, et al, 2016). Every school, under Title IX, should have a coordinator responsible for acting to ensure the safety of the student if sexual misconduct or discrimination occurs. Yet, we know that “because the great majority of sexual assaults are not reported to campus or law enforcement personnel, formal crime statistics grossly underestimate the scope of the problem” (Gray, Hassija, & Steinmetz, 2017, p. 5). Thus, more needs to be done on university campuses to address women’s rights, especially as they pertain to the problems of sexual misconduct.

In these turbulent times, LGBTQ+ centers are more vital to cultivating students’ resilience from hate and resistance to oppressive systems. As practitioners, we can employ critical hope as a framework to help cultivate students’ resilience and resistance to Trump’s omnipresent oppressive regime.

In these turbulent times, LGBTQ+ centers are more vital to cultivating students’ resilience from hate and resistance to oppressive systems. As practitioners, we can employ critical hope as a framework to help cultivate students’ resilience and resistance to Trump’s omnipresent oppressive regime.

In this cultural moment, LGBTQ+ centers can be spaces of support for women’s intersecting identities. First, they can provide an opportunity for women to share their experiences on campus with sexual harassment or assault. Witnessing and validating students’ hurt is a form of Socratic hope, and through listening to those who are surviving sexual assault, centers can embody this form. Exhibiting Socratic hope also means understanding the anger a survivor might feel and affirming those feelings. Second, staff at LGBTQ+ centers can assist students in documenting and reporting any instances that may arise, accompanying them to the proper authorities if desired. In one sense, the staff member is also a form of material hope simply by being with a student. As a resource, having another human to believe a person’s testimony and facilitate reporting is invaluable. In another sense, the act of support also reflects audacious hope. It helps the student navigate the system, one which often oppresses women and silences their voices in situations of sexual misconduct, especially when the perpetrator is in a position of power.

Conclusion

Almost daily, the media reports new policy implementations or rollbacks that target the most vulnerable populations, in particular, LGBTQ+ individuals.

*References: Can be found at the end of this special issue.
In November 2016, Republican candidate Donald Trump won the presidential election with 304 electoral votes over Democrat Hillary Clinton’s 227, despite the difference of 2.9 million in the popular vote in favor of Clinton. The discriminatory and hate-filled rhetoric of the Trump campaign raised concerns that the advancements of rights for “sexual and gender minorities” made under President Barack Obama’s administration would be limited or rescinded (Veldhuis, Drabble, Riggie, Wootton & Hughes, 2018, p. 27). The fate of Title IX of the Education Amendments was of concern due to the calamitous appointment of Trump’s nominee, Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education. DeVos, due to the calamitous appointment of Trump’s nominee, Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education. DeVos, the future of Title IX reform seems dim (Riggie, Wootton & Hughes, 2018, p. 726). The discourse of campus sexual violence (Yoffe, 2017). Later that month, a new Dear Colleague Letter rescinding the 2011 and 2014 guidance (United States Department of Education (DOE), 2017) was released, signed by Acting Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, Candice Jackson. In place of the repealed Obama-era guidance, the new DCL outlined significant changes that provided a glimpse of this administration’s direction. The future of Title IX reform seems dim and uncertain given an administration overladen with “grab her by the pussy” recordings (Fahrenheit, 2016), inexperienced female “inheritors” (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003) inducted into the old boys’ club under the auspices of the Department of Education and the default to fake news to evade responsibility.

The purpose of this article is to employ a feminist critical policy analysis (Marshall, 1998) of Title IX guidance from the Department of Education. The Obama-era guidance was heralded as successful in bringing national attention to campus sexual violence, and mobilized universities to update practices to address the issue (Collins, 2016). The current administration, however, has left many worried about the legitimation of messages of exclusion, hate and violence (Veldhuis et al., 2018). The discourse of campus sexual violence from the current administration reflects dominant narratives of rape that “blame the victim, question the victim’s credibility, imply that the victim deserved being raped, denigrate the victim, and trivialize the rape experience” (Ward, 1988 as cited in Nagal, Matuso, McIntyre, & Morrison, 2005, p. 726). Negative attitudes toward rape victims are exacerbated by perceptions of race, culture, and gender (Collins, 2018; Crenshaw, 1989; Nagal et al., 2005). Feminist analysis using a critical lens recognizes intersections of identities and the impact these have on marginalized groups (Biklen, Marshall & Pollard, 2008; Shaw, 2004). Utilizing feminist critical analysis, I aim to expose the prevailing power relations in Title IX policy for a more complete understanding of its implementation from the perspectives of both the policymakers and those affected by the policy (Shaw, 2004, p. 57).

Feminist critical analysis can be applied to the spectrum of sex-based discrimination defined by Title IX. However, for this analysis, I will focus specifically on regulations regarding sexual violence and rape. According to the Office of Civil Rights, sexual violence refers to “physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person’s will or where a person is incapable of giving consent,” including rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, sexual abuse, and sexual coercion (United States Department of Education, 2011, p. 1). In this article, I begin with an overview feminist critical policy analysis and explain its use to analyze Title IX guidance. Next, with the intent to expose the intersections of sexism with other forms of oppression and further marginalization, I will use critical feminist thought to (a) examine rape; (b) review the implementation and responses to the 2011 DCL; and (c) examine the five significant changes in the new Title IX guidance. Finally, I will provide discussion points to facilitate future considerations for Title IX implementation.

Feminist Critical Policy Analysis

Feminist critical policy analysis problematizes policies to reveal sexism and discrimination, including racial, sexual, and social class biases, inherent in commonly accepted theories and concepts (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003; Marshall, 1999). According to Marshall (1997 as cited in Shaw, 2004), White, well-educated males dominate approaches to policy analysis; therefore, the worldview of this group is valued and widely accepted. Feminist critical analysis reveals androcentrism (centered on male or masculine interests) in the ways policies exclude women or proclaim neutrality, essentially disenfranchising or denying women opportunity, agency, or power (Biklen, Marshall & Pollard, 2008). Simply adding sex, or women, as a protected class is not in itself transformative (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003; Shaw, 2004). The key tenets of feminist critical theory are reciprocal to the goal of challenging dominant structures that deny access to power and further oppress marginalized groups. First, gender must be the center of analysis, whereby assessment of structures and policies is gender conscious, not gender blind or neutral (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003; Shaw, 2004). As in critical theory, lived experiences are essential in data collection. Feminist critical policy analysts rely on the “lived experiences of women, as told by women, and they also utilize discourse analysis to uncover the ideologies and assumptions embedded in policy documents” (Shaw, 2004, p. 59). Analysis must be viewed from the counter narratives and voices of those disenfranchised or discriminated (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003). Critical feminism recognizes the intersections (Crenshaw, 1989) of gender, race, sexuality and social class; thus, the purpose of this approach is not to develop a generic universal understanding of the human experience, rather it is to underscore the ways in which these identities vary the effects of policies (Shaw, 2004). Finally, feminist critical policy analysis must be transformative, a form of action research (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997 as cited in Shaw, 2004).

Using Feminist Critical Analysis with Title IX

One could assume that a feminist critical policy analysis framework was applied at all levels of amending Title IX because sex is a variable in the policy. Or per-
haps because sex is embedded in the policy, gender biases are not a concern. Conventional policy analysts would argue that because sex is the basis of this anti-discrimination policy, it is not necessary to analyze its potential for gender bias toward males. A close examination of perceptions of rape is paramount in the analysis of the current status and direction of Title IX. The current administration’s approach in repealing previous Title IX guidance mirrors patriarchal and racist relations toward sexual violence and exposes the prevalence of an un-written threat to power (Crenshaw, 1991; Harris & Linder, 2017; Nagal et al., 2005). DeVos and critics of the Obama-era guidance have focused much of their attention on the negative impact these changes have had on students accused of sexual violence. Many of the examples used support this claim follow the dominant narrative of sexual violence. Implementing Title IX provides a venue for false reporting against innocent White male students (Joyce, 2017; Taylor & Johnson, 2015; Yoffe, 2017). Employing feminist critical analysis has the potential to fully realize the spirit of Title IX by revealing the groupings that are recognized or excluded by the policy (Collins, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991; Marshall, 1999; Shaw, 2004). Feminist critical scholarship is limited in regards to Title IX because of the policy’s prevailing ambiguous status. However, the basis of gender in Title IX and the complexities of sexual violence fortify how the per- sonalized narrative in which White cisgender women are victims of sexual assault remains political; hence, a feminist critical approach is exceptionally appropriate. An area of contention in using feminist critical analysis on Title IX is that the policy is inherently gender-charged, whereas the literature on this method is typically applied to seemingly neutral structures. Instead of focusing on gender in this policy, feminist critical analysis problematizes the policymakers and the political processes that govern gender. Activism to implement Title IX guidelines was led by policymakers who may identify as feminist and advocate for change in the government. In her article “Trading the Megaphone for the Gavel in Title IX Enforcement,” Halley (2015) called out feminists within the government that pushed for the Obama-era Title IX regulations (p. 103). These “strategic feminists” (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003, p. 347) or “feminocrats” (Frazenzvay, Court, & Connell, 1989 and Watson, 1990 as cited in Marshall, 1999, p. 66) perhaps neutralized the discourse of campus sexual violence as all-inclusive to remain at the table for governmental power over Title IX regulation (Collins; 2016; Halley, 2015). Although this tactic conflicts with critical feminism, the use of heterocentrism (assumption that all people are heterosexual), gender binarism (system that limits gender identity to opposite categories i.e. boy and man or girl and woman), and neutralization to develop, implement and govern Title IX, was perhaps necessary to win the approval of the dominant center. Neutralizing Title IX in this way, however, eradicates the experiences of the disproportionate number of women that are sexually assaulted. Even more troublesome is the absence of the impact that race, class, and ability have in the discourse on prevention and intervention of campus sexual violence. Furthermore, the assertion of the dominant narrative where women are victims and men are rapists excludes the experiences of male survivors, transgender survivors or sexual violence in same-sex relationships (Davies & Hudson, 2011). Harris & Linder, 2017; Marine, 2017), which critics can use to counter any attempt toward gender equity. Yet, the same heterocentric and gender binary assumptions are being used to charge Obama-era guidance with inequitable practice. Exposing and navigating the nuances of patriarchal politics requires the use of a lens that unsettling the power dynamics and facilitates transformation.

Traditional policy analysis believes in a single truth and assumes objectivity is achievable and desirable (Shaw, 2004), contrary to critical analysis. Critical feminist threats power structures by revealing the poten-tial flaws in practices and decisions that would other- wise be normalized and accepted. Bensimon and Marshall (2003) explain that traditional analysis pos- tions gender as an environmental variable referring “only to those areas both structural and ideological involving sex/sexuality, whereas the gender is not seen as relevant to issues where gender is not explicit” (p. 344). “As an environmental variable the implication is that gender is a concept associated with the study of things related to women” (Bensimon and Marshall, 2003, p. 344), thus, only problematizing women. A feminist critical approach would position gender as an environmental variable by re-framing policies to light on how “they can and do result in perverse obstinate consequences for women” (Bensimon and Marshall, 2003, p. 344). Positioning gender as a category of analysis instead of an environmental variable shifts interpretation away from problematizing women “blame-the-victim or change-the-victim approach” (Bensimon and Marshall, 2003, p. 344). Consequently, reframing questions using this approach changes the focus of the solution. I hope to disrupt the discourse of campus sexual violence by reframing the analysis of Title IX reform, and provide critical discourse for professionals in higher education.

Title IX Analysis
Rape
Interestingly, much of the literature used to examine Title IX in this article does not include a definition of rape. It begins with a commonly provided base for understanding gender and its complexities as an essential component in analyzing Title IX policy. The common denominators in the variables required for the legal definition of rape are sexual penetration and the absence of consent (Estrich, 1986; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1999 as cited in Jozkowski, 2015; Rape Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), 2018). Rape laws have been adjusted over the years to include forms of sexual violence other than penile penetration of the vagina (Corrigan, 2013). For example, some statutes vary in recognizing vaginal penetration, stipulations around statutory rape, oral penetra-tion by a sex organ, digital penetration, penetration with foreign objects, rape between married individu- als, and so forth.

Conceptualization of rape follows the dominant narrative in which White cisgender women are victims of rape by straight, cisgender men of color (Crenshaw, 1991; Harris & Linder, 2017). This patriarchal and racist perception constructs stereotypical attitudes toward victims (Crenshaw, 1991; Davies & Hudson, 2011; Nagal et al., 2005) and disregards the experiences of survivors of color; transgender and male survivors; lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer survivors; and survi-vors with disabilities (Crenshaw, 1991; Harris & Linder, 2017). In rape law, “the male standard defines a crime committed against women, and male standards are used not only to judge the motives of the con-duct of women victims” (Estrich, 1986, p. 1091). The widely accepted patriarchal view of women’s sexuality places property-like aspects on the body, while men’s sexuality and even sexual aggression is celebrat-ed (Crenshaw, 1991). Additionally, traditional gender roles shape attributions of rape victimization. Conse- quently, victims that deviate from socially accepted gender roles (i.e. transgender, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer) experience higher rates of sexual violence, but the stigmatization of their identities pushes them further to the margins, limiting access to services and justice (Davies & Hudson, 2011; Grubb & Turner; 2012; Veldhuis, et al., 2018). Racism ascerts who is ca-pable of committing rape and who can be raped. The stereotype that perpetrators of rape are usually men of color is upheld by the sensationalized focus on savage or animalistic representations of Black men (Crenshaw, 1991). The hypersexualization of Black women, and commodification of Asian women, narrows the percep-tion of “true victims” to White females, eliminating the experiences of sexual violence in communities of color (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991; Harris, 2017; Harris & Linder, 2017). These patriarchal and racist views reinforce misconceptions of what constitutes “real” (Estrich, 1986, p. 1088) rape versus, for lack of a better term, non-traditional rape.

At the forefront, the combination of sexual penetra-tion and the absence of consent criminalize rape, yet the vast majority of rape goes unreported (Corrigan, 2013; Davies & Hudson, 2011; Harris & Linder, 2017). Though 310 are reported to law enforcement, 11 of those are referred for prosecution, and seven lead to felony con-victions (RAINN, 2018). RAINN (2018) indicates women and girls experience sexual violence at high rates; one in six American women being victims of attempted or completed rape.

Through a critical feminist lens, the disproportion-ate number of offenders convicted of rape versus the number of women experiencing sexual violence reveals a prejudiced system governed and privileged by men. Despite updates in rape laws to expand the discourse of sexual violence to look beyond the act of intercourse and include dynamics of power and control, the burden to prove victimization continues to fall on the survivors. Strains from the dominant narrative of rape questions everything about the survivor’s behavior (prior and current) and the entire community's response to the survivor.
identities that contributed to the act of sexual viola-
tion. Ultimately, the policies and statutes associated with
determining whether a crime of rape occurred, not to
to mention guilt of rape, to Title IX policy and institu-
tional responses to sexual violence.

As anticipated, the potential to hold men and colleges
accountable roused opposition of this united federal
front. Critics neglected any focus on campus sexual vi-
rulence, immediately investigating female
sexual behavior. Early carnal statistics and
rape laws understood within this discourse
to illustrate that the objective of rape statutes
traditionally has not been to protect women from
corvex intimacy but to protect and maintain a
property-like interest in female chastity (Cren-

Campus Sexual Violence and the 2011
Dear Colleague Letter

Despite heightened attention to campus sexual
violence recently, rape on college campuses is not
a new concept. Sexual violence in postsecondary
institutions has remained consistent, with 20-25% of
college women experiencing rape or attempted rape
(Jussup-Anger & Edwards, 2015). In addition, male col-
lege students are approximately five times more likely
than their non-student counterparts to be victims of
rape or sexual assault (BJS, 2018). In the light of
what is known now as Title IX reform, I ask you to think
back to the landscape of sexual violence education
and adjudication on college campuses before 2011.
Sexual violence was adjudicated on a case-by-case
basis and school policies described what behaviors
did not amount to consent versus what it is and how it is
attained (Childs, 2017; Jozkowski, 2015). Additional
factors contributed to how IHE responded to reports
of rape: the clout of the accused rapist, the victim’s
alcohol consumption, the victim’s reputation, and so
forth. Motivation to establish a standardized approach
for campuses to investigate and eliminate sexual vio-
lence derived from an increasing number of student
narratives that claimed their universities refused to
investigate reports of sexual violence, “sweeping issues
under the rug” (Childs, 2017). Additionally, there were
a growing number of sexual misconduct cases which university admin-
istrators were aware of, but failed to do anything, i.e., Penn State, Michigan State University and University of Missouri.

To clarify and expand its Revised Sexual Harassment
Guidance (2001), the OCR released the infamous
2011 Dear Colleague Letter followed schools to
standardize definitions of behaviors constituting sexual
discrimination and developing procedures to handle
campus sexual violence. The OCR clearly stated that
“sexual violence refers to physical acts perpetrated
against a person's will or where a person is incapable
of giving consent due to the victim’s use of substance,
intellectual or other disability and provides examples
of sexually violence acts” (United States Department of
Education, 2011). Institutional obligations under this
guidance were:
1. The school must take immediate and appropriate
measures once they are put on notice;
2. Regardless of an existing criminal investigation,
the school must take prompt and effective steps
to end the violence, prevent its recurrence and
address its effects;
3. Schools must implement interim measures to pro-
tect the complainer, even prior to a final decision of
investigation;
4. Grievance procedures for students to file com-
plaints of sexual violence must be provided. Pro-
cedures must include equal opportunity for both
parties to a) present witnesses and evidence, and
b) the same appeal rights;
5. The preponderance of evidence standard must be
used to resolve complaints of sex discrimination; and
6. Both parties must be notified of the final outcome
of the complaint (United States Department of
Education, 2011). The Department of Justice (DOJ)
reinforced the procedures to codify campus sex assault policies established under the previous administration. Since her confrir-
mation hearings in early 2017, Secretary DeVos hinted at changes to the previous
Title IX guidance. In July 2017, concerns arose when she held meetings with
questionable stakeholders regarding policy change (Kreighbaum, 2017).

In her announcement of repeal two months later, she said, “One rape is one
too many, one assault is one too many, one woman or man
treated unfairly is one too
many. One person denied due pro-
cess is one too many” emphasizing the
last point (Kreighbaum, 2017). Citing ap-
typical Title IX cases mishandling reports
of rape, DeVos announced her intent
to review the Obama-era guidance
and criticized IHE with running “kangaroo
courts” (Rothman, 2017).

Though it does not require campuses to alter current policies, the new OCR Ques-

“...the hypersexualization of Black women, and commodification of Asian women, narrows the perception of “true victims” to White females, eliminating the experiences of sexual violence in communities of color.”
them expelled for “regret sex” (Joyce, 2017). Now that schools have the option to increase the standard of proof, there is worry that students held responsible under the previous policy will return to their institutions to have their cases rebased or file lawsuits (Miltlenberg in Joyce, 2017). The Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA) president released a statement soon after the repeal to declare the association’s support of the preponderance of evidence, stating, “slinging out sex assault to have higher standard perpetuates rape culture” (Kruger, 2017, para. 5).

Appeal of outcome of campus investigations. Appeals in the current guidance are divided under two conditions: by the accused, or (b) by both parties if voluntarily agreed upon. The previous guidance allowed for either party to file an appeal, where institutions indicated two conditions in which one could be filed: (a) introduction of new evidence, or (b) a due process violation. The current guidance limits an appeal to the responding party, citing the accused individual is the one who risks penalty and therefore should not be tried twice for the same allegation. (United States Department of Education, 2011). Contrary to the guidance’s commitment to equitable procedures for all parties, the option for a complainant to file an appeal was removed from the new guidance, which brings up multiple concerns. Though schools can provide this option to both parties, it does not include stipulations for a party that is unable to have an advisor that can participate at the same degree as the other party. Based on my own experiences, it is typical for the accused to hire an attorney, while the reporting party must rely on the behavior, the behavior, stop and avoid legal-pleadings procedures — often they prefer university investigations over the courts (Wes, 2015). Most campuses allow either party to have a supporting individual present during interviews, however their role is limited to their physical presence and consultation, separate from the proceedings.

Set time frame for investigation and resolution. The OCR no longer requires a set time frame for campus investigations and leaves institutions an option to determine how long an investigation runs. Institutions would be evaluated instead on their good faith effort to provide fair and impartial investigations (United States Department of Education, 2017). Campus administrators acknowledge the 60-day timeframe was too short, however supported this guideline because it placed responsibility on the institution to prevent violence and further harassment. The rationale for removing the time limit would allow for parties, particularly the accused, time to respond to the allegations, gather evidence, and round up witnesses (Joyce, 2017). “Absence of a timeline risks leaving both students in perpetual states of limbo awaiting jurisdiction” (Kruger, 2017, para. 2).

Informal resolutions. Inconsistent with the 2011 Guidance, the OCR adds mediation as an option for resolution, previously unmentioned in campus sexual violence adjudications. The irony is that the same administration granting institutions permission to mediate sexual violence also condemned university investigations as “kangaroo courts” (Kreighbaum, 2017). In the master narrative, mediation protects accused male students by eliminating a conduct violation on their education record while the female accuser remains responsible for determining if and how her rapist will be held accountable.

Support persons. “Any process made available to one party in the adjudication procedure should be made equally available to the other party (for example, the right to have an attorney or other advisor present and/or participate in an interview or hearing; the right to cross-examine parties and witnesses or to submit questions to be asked of parties and witnesses)” (United States Department of Education, 2017). Though ambiguously positioned in the Q & A document, the OCR now permits the accused, or party’s attorney or support advisor, contrary to previous guidance. The debate regarding support advisors and their role is limited to their physical presence and consultation, separate from the proceedings. Opposition interests motivate the difference between current practices and the OCR’s optional suggestions for reactions. The above provision acknowledges the importance of the OCR to cross-examine parties and witnesses or to submit questions to be asked of parties and witnesses” (United States Department of Education, 2017, pg. 4). The Trump administration echoes the interests of Title IX critics and enacted their opposition through this repeal. In New York Times Magazine’s “The Takedown of Title IX,” conservative Republican state representative, Earl Ehrhart, is quoted after meeting with DeVos about Title IX: “She’s placing this back where it belongs, in the purview of the states” (Joyce, 2017, para. 24). Though the future of Title IX is somewhat of a mystery, one thing is clear: in regard to campus rape, the presumed innocent White male falsely accused of sexual violence, has priority above all else.

Discussion

The Personal is Still Political

My personal and professional identities are directly impacted by the complexities of Title IX. The fact that policies that mainly impact women (i.e. reproductive rights, Title IX) continue to become governed by lawmakers maintains my personal identities and experiences as political. I am a woman of color with ethnic roots in a country that was colonized for centuries. Documentation of the use of rape as a tool of power in colonized nations shapes the ways women of color perceive our roles in society and how we experience sexual violence, in particular. As a Title IX confidential advocate on a college campus, navigating the evolving institutional policies to address sexual violence is just as much of a learning experience for me as it is for the students I work with. My professional role on my campus allows me to navigate university procedures that are not accessible to students. I do not mean to point blame at any institution for implementing difficult policies and procedures. Instead I want to shine light on the gap that remains between institutional compliance and the lived experiences of students. Recent Title IX guidance appeared to provide an alternative to the criminal justice system, which was often a barrier for reporting sexual violence. The guidance however continues to mirror the criminal justice system, which has being proven to perpetuate patriarchal and racist structures oppressing marginalized groups. The burden remains on reporting parties to prove victimization, ensuring due process rights for accused individuals. Consequently, critiques of Title IX procedures reflect the expectations of the dominant patriarchal and racist criminal justice system. This paternalistic approach further silences the interests of all the subjects of the law: our students. Political decisions regarding campus sexual violence are extremely personal for the students they are intended to protect. Therefore, it is imperative that lawmakers and administrators recognize power, privilege and domination in implementing gender-based policies.

Missing Voices

The discourse of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 within the last decade has brought our attention to campus sexual violence. Specifically the ways in which IHE’s handled or mishandled reports of these crimes. Absent from many recent discussions are...
the victims of rape, sexual assault and discrimination. Even the voices of the student survivor activists that brought these issues to Washington, D.C. have fallen to the back of the room and are silenced by cries for due process — in hopes of upholding the master narratives and directives of those who wish to keep power intact. Also missing from the current conversation are the voices of people of color, homosexual, non-binary, and communities marginalized by socioeconomic and education status. The anti-discrimination law meant to protect marginalized groups, will never be fully realized until the society that renders these communities invisible is dismantled. Moreover, until we can counter the narratives of our sexuality and experiences of rape and sexual violence, we will not know equity.

Feminist critical thought has evolved over the years, recognizing the intersections of identities and layers of oppression that are not validated nor protected by society. Crenshaw (1989) points out how simplifying our understanding of rape further targets our marginalized identities. “The singular focus on rape as a manifestation of male power over female sexuality tends to eclipse the use of rape as a weapon of [racial] terror” (p. 158). Critical feminism challenges us to be uncomfortable and confront the status quo. This examination of Title IX reveals that the personal is still very political and to be accountable to critical feminism (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003) it is our voices that must tell our story.

Trump and the Trumpeteers

So far, descriptions of the gatekeepers of power are as elite White men, or something to that effect. This allegorical group of White men refers to those who have clout, privilege and influence resulting from patriarchy, not necessarily always White, and not always male. Due to Trump’s election, we have names and faces of those who have hold this power. Feminist critical policy analysis calls upon the disruption of dominant narratives (Biklen et al., 2008) by revealing the assumptions and ideals of said group, specifically President Donald Trump, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos and Acting Assistant Secretary of Civil Rights Candice Jackson. I believe the bigotries of the 45th President of the United States are common knowledge internationally. For examples of his prejudices, please refer to the 2005 recording (Fahrenthold, 2016) of our current president bragging about “grabbing them [women] by the pussy” and follow his Twitter account @realDonaldTrump.

The same day the Office of Civil Rights released the interim guidance, Democratic National Jess O’Connell tweeted “banner day when Republicans can find their last sleeping together was not quite right” (Kreighbaum, 2017, para. 6). I will be bold and agree with O’Connell to say that DeVos and Jackson are token women to do dirty work against women. The present power structures challenge student affairs practitioners and educators to reignite our activism toward social justice. At the center of our efforts are our students’ rights to safety and protection of their access to education.

Conclusion

This feminist critical policy analysis of Title IX only hit the tip of the iceberg, revealing the further subordination of women and other oppressed groups through policies and structures governed by ideals and assumptions that view women as less-than. For true transformation, there is a need to reframe all steps of policy development, implementation, and analysis. Of utmost importance, is a reminder that the personal is still political, especially when addressing sexual violence.

For true transformation, there is a need to reframe all steps of policy development, implementation, and analysis. Of utmost importance, is a reminder that the personal is still political, especially when addressing sexual violence.

Suggested Citation:
I think about the Gullah people
Unlearning a loaded canon
Daughters of the Dust
Ancestors from the depths
of the Lowlands
Resilient as the seashore with clothes of white foam

My pride has been mis-placed into things
That shine me up
Doves
To shake off the sand from a hundred and seventy-five mile
stretch of road
And indigo
To heal the scars of being

It is a reason to take lovers
From far away places
Finding freedom on the shores of glitz
It is the reason for the world’s infatuation
With forty-four
Whose redness is unridden
by revolt
And the stench of those ships

While the night sky
for hours
hides beyond the clouds
Holding up the moon
and every story she knows
Abandoned and wrapped in same-colored flags
She persists
To beckon with tidesong
The steadfast light of her truth burns through

I am already home.
I, too, am this land.
I am
descended of miracles.

Suggested Citation:


On November 9, 2016, many White\(^1\) progressive liberal Americans woke up with a sense of dread and disillusionment that Donald Trump was the President-elect of the United States (Mei, 2016). “How could this be? How could this be happening to our country?” they wondered. After all, “Make America Great Again,” a phrase whose ‘great,’ widely heard as ‘White,’ was not some-

thing White liberals supported” (Irvin Painter, 2016). As the news circulated social media, “progressive” Whites broadcast their trepidation and their shock became evident. Voices from marginalized communities were far less surprised, given their everyday lived experiences in a heteropatriarchal White supremacist society (Chang, 2016; Parker West, 2016). Critics of White liberal dismiss disarray even further when it was discovered that the culprits responsible for electing Trump were not just working-class, uneducated White men, as was sold by the liberal media. A total of 53% of the vote for Trump came from White women.

These figures led some progressives to believe that White women had ‘sold out’ by negating an allegiance to feminism (with Women of Color) and aligning with the patriarchy (behind White men) (Lett, 2016). This is not to suggest White women acted alone, as 62% of Trump’s votes came from White male supporters. The common denominator among these voters was their Whiteness (Coates, 2017). And while many White liberals quickly began labeling Trump supporters as ‘racists’ in an effort to demonstrate their own racial piety, critical race scholars remind us that all White people are complicit in perpetuating White supremacy, regardless of their political affiliation, awareness, or intentions (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Mills, 2007).

It didn’t take long after Donald Trump’s election for educators to see the backlash of a newly (re)empowered White America. For example, in P-20 spaces there was terrifying evidence of Whiteness being re-centered and racism moving from the covert to the overt (e.g., the “Make America White Again” dugout with swastika symbol (Wallace, 2016) and the banning of courses teaching ‘White privilege’ (Saxena, 2017)). Alt-right leaders, like Richard Spencer and Milo Yiannopoulos, descended upon colleges and universities across the country, challenging campus free speech policies and recruiting students for their cause (Arriaga, 2017). Emboldened movements of White supremacy and White nationalism have swept college campuses since Trump’s inauguration, including a horrific display of hatred, violence, and death in August 2017 at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Despite the rise in overt White supremacist movements after the election, Whiteness is and has always been embedded within the fabric of education in the United States. Indeed, all educators must consider how teaching practices, both subtle and overt, might influence people susceptible to racist ideologies (Chatelain, 2017). As racialized White educators and scholars, the authors of this essay belong to the population that they critique. Aronson is a racially White, ethnically Latina, cis-gender, heterosexual, male, doctoral candidate who teaches master’s level student affairs graduate students. While Aronson and Ashlee come from teacher education and student affairs backgrounds respectively, they are both charged with the task of preparing future educators who work directly with students in P-20 settings. Through their teaching, they also strive to work against the systems that have historically established and continue to perpetuate White dominance in education.

The purpose of this article is to critically examine how White higher education instructors work through the tensions of dread and hope while supporting and preparing educators during the Trump Administration. Through critical autoethnographic methodology (Boynton & Orbe, 2014), Aronson and Ashlee demonstrate that White higher education instructors have a responsibility to critically teach about Whiteness and White supremacy in the classroom. Although racism has never been dormant, the current political climate featur-
Aronson and Ashlee: Education as Resistance in the Trump Era

Context and Background

Aronson and Ashlee’s own university campus equally felt the realities of the “Trump Effect” impacting educational spaces nationwide (Costello, 2016). Located in a crucial state where 78 electoral votes went to Trump by a slim margin of 51.3% , their mid-sized public university voted 61.1% in favor of Donald Trump. Situated in rural community, this university consists of a predominantly White undergraduate, graduate, student, faculty, and staff population. Needless to say, the overwhelming Whiteness of this college campus did not help students of Color, the LGBTQ community, international students, or students who were undocumented feel safe before, during, or after the election.

Prior to the Trump’s victory, the surrounding community outside of Aronson and Ashlee’s university was filled with signs in support of Trump/Pence as well as signs supporting “Hillary Clinton for Prison.” A few miles away from campus, this bumper sticker (Photo 1) was posted on a vehicle.

Alt-Right leader Milo Yiannopoulos also spoke on campus just prior to the start of the Spring 2016 semester. Shortly after Trump was elected, Aronson and Ashlee began seeing images such as Photos 2, 3, and 4 posted around their campus:

The website associated with these advertisements, called ‘The Right Stuff,’ is self-described as a blog dedicated to diversity dialogue, but the site’s content unapologetically favors White supremacy and White nationalism (http://therightstuff.biz/about-us/).

Evidence of burgeoning White supremacy leading up to and following Trump’s election left many marginalized students on campus feeling isolated, scared, and unwelcomed. As White educators on this campus, Aronson and Ashlee believed it was their responsibility to address the rise of White supremacy in education happening around the nation, and at their institution. Despite a call from university administration to remain politically neutral in the classroom, they felt the need to address students’ escalating dread about the campus political climate and perceptions of safety. Additionally, they felt a responsibility to remain positive, orienting students toward effective strategies for taking action, resisting, and moving forward. Guided by a theoretical lens of Critical Whiteness Studies (CWS), the authors use their own critical autoethnographic narratives of teaching to illuminate the need for higher education instructors to maintain critical hope and think or talk about White privilege that can easily escape any classroom is the ability not to have to be racially-just educators during the Trump Administration.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Whiteness Studies

As White educators working with White students, Aronson and Ashlee occupy a troubling positionality which lends itself to problematic outcomes when left unexamined. While it is crucial to center the experiences of racially-minoritized students, exclusively doing so criticalizes White educators and White students to leave their privilege on the shelf. Indeed, when educators confront White students with the realities of Whiteness from the perspective of people of Color without addressing the systemic constructions of Whiteness, marginalized voices are dismissed and learning is delayed (Leonardo, 2004; Reason & Evans, 2007). Incorporating elements of CWS (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997) into their classroom, Aronson and Ashlee sought to examine the socio-historical construction of Whiteness, White privilege, and White supremacy in the United States.

Critical Whiteness Studies is a field of scholarship dedicated to identifying and deconstructing the racial construct of Whiteness. Broadly, CWS is a theoretical framework employed to analyze the historic, social, political, and cultural elements of White supremacy. Emerging from African American intellectual traditions, CWS began with observations about what it means to be White in the United States from Black scholars including W. E. B. Du Bois (1920), James Baldwin (2010), and bell hooks (1994). Additionally, CWS draws further origins from Critical Race Theory (CRT), a theoretical framework that aims to prioritize and center the experiences of people of Color through personal accounts which challenge the hegemonic narrative of White supremacy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Within education, CWS emphasizes that “[w]hiteness, acknowledged or not, has been a norm against which other races are judged” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997, p. 1) and works to equalize that power. CWS as an educational approach examines the ways in which history, law, culture, and pseudoscience have contributed to the construction of Whiteness, racism, and White supremacy in the United States. The establishment of these systemic mechanisms result in several privileges for White people, including the ability to achieve upward social mobility despite class disparities. Ultimately CWS offers an educational imperative, namely that “Whites may – and should – study race, including their own” (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997, p. 605).

Literature Review

In addition to serving as a theoretical framework guiding pedagogy, many scholars have used CWS to interrogate Whiteness in the classroom. For example, researchers such as Christine Sleeter (1992) and Alice McIntyre (1997) examined how White teachers avoided conversations on race and racism, which contributes to the oppressive influence of Whiteness within education. Although scholars have begun to address the need for educators to critically examine Whiteness, there is a dearth of research related to CWS in higher education (Cabreña, Franklin, & Watson, 2017). Much of the CWS analysis in higher education has looked at ways White college students make meaning of Whiteness. For example, a national study which surveyed over 1,000 college students found that most White students ultimately held underlying racist beliefs and attitudes (Picca & Feagin, 2007). Reason and Evans (2007) found White college students
who strive to be racial justice allies, on the other hand, must continuously and critically examine their White-ness. Both these findings suggest that educators must (or should) bring college students “racial interactions” to the forefront and create an environment where White students can hold each other accountable for racist behavior.

Ultimately, the most insidious form of White privilege that can easily escape any classroom is the ability not to have to think or talk about race (Reason & Evans, 2007). Colorblind racism is commonplace among White students at predominantly White institutions (Bonilla-Silva, 2006), but even more alarming are White higher education instructors who either choose not to engage in the topic of racism with students or do not feel they know how. For both White students and White instructors, White fragility leads to White silence, White comfort, and White supremacy in the classroom (DiAngelo, 2011). On the contrary, White educators might also reinforce White supremacy through discourses encompassing “morality” (Applebaum, 2011). By situating moral responsibility as an “action” that focuses on the individual, this relieves a White educator from ever acknowledging how they are situated and complicit in the system of White supremacy.

CWS requires that White educators reflect on the hegemonic control Whiteness holds on the imagination and study the ways White people “deflect, ignore, or dismiss” their role in the permanence of racism (Maitas, Viesca, Garrison-Wade, Tandon, & Galindo, 2014, p. 291). Indeed, simply acknowledging individual White privilege not enough for educators to be anti-racist and socially just. Educational conversations about race, racism, and White supremacy in the classroom are not easy. Higher education instructors who employ CWS may find themselves and their students steeped in feelings of guilt, shame, and dread. Aronson and Ashlee share their autoethnographic narratives as “an essential tool for higher education instructors in as an example for higher education instructors in reflecting, memories, and dialogue with each other that the authors present their data in the form of autoethnographic narratives, which ask readers to enter the world of the researcher and join in this process of reflexivity.

Brittany’s Narrative
Fall 2016 was a contentious time to be in any classroom. The presidential election. It was through the development of CWS that students start to resist and become angry with me after I have them watch White Me by Tiara Wise and read “Why Do You Make Me Hate Myself?” by Cheryl Matias. However, as we continue to work through the semester, they lead projects on justice topics and create a positionality project interrogating themselves that allows for them to continue to work through their own emotionality (Matias, 2016a, emphasis added). This past semester, I had some unexpected challenges, when I mistakenly thought several of my students were “buying in” to what we were talking about in class, yet on the mid-semester evaluation, I had been accused of “White-shaming” and not creating a “safe space” for others to express their views. This wasn’t the first time I had heard feedback like this before. But, for some reason, I took this feedback extremely personally. As I read these words, I felt like I had been punched in the stomach. Perhaps it was the political climate. This was right before the election in late October. Perhaps it was also me. I got overconfident in my abilities to reach the privileged. I had grown to know enlightening.

I ran out of time. My students would be in their field placement the next week and between the conference I was attending, and them being in schools, it would be two weeks before I would see them again. I responded to their feedback and I wrote them a letter trying to clarify my intentions and reach the privileged. I had grown to know enlightening. I’d like to contest this idea with you as I did on the first day of class as it reads in the syllabus. If you have never been in a classroom where you haven’t felt “unsafe” then you more than likely have been privileged to be in that space or you never have been challenged before. Particularly in teacher education,

More than ever, the work for racial justice and radical love (hooks, 2000) was needed, and as a privileged racially White woman I had to shake myself out of my misery and regain perspective as to my role in this battle we would inherently face these next four years.
we note that often when you are not feeling “safe” really this means “uncomfortable.”
I gave them some additional resources and they went away. I felt depleted. I felt like I had failed. Then the election happened.
I was one of those people we wrote about in our introduction. As I sat in my small apartment watching the live coverage of the election on November 8, 2016, I was not too worried about it. But as the hours passed and state by state turned red, I was in disbelief. I woke up the next morning feeling a dread I had never experienced before. I didn’t know this feeling as I had lived in the “safe space” mentioned above that I critiqued my students for craving. I felt little hope at that moment. I felt depleted. I felt like I had failed. Then the election happened.
Two weeks flew by and I was about to see my current students again. I was anxious and nervous. I wasn’t sure what I was going to say to them. I decided that because we had so much to do end semester, I would write them a letter telling them how I felt and what I had learned these past two weeks. I shared with them the story of my former student who had jolted me back to life another time (from that former 5th grade class). I told them how she reminded me of the need to center love and that this is always where I come in from the work that I do with them. My pushing them into discomfort comes from a place of love not only for them, but their future students. I shared my fears in what had been happening in times this past week. Another shared how their cooperating teacher was very pro-Trump and saying derogatory things about Hilary Clinton, such as now we can lock her up. I sat there disabused as I had realized was being mulling in my own shock and they were out in schools witnessing these realities. We never got to our lesson.
What was needed in that space was an opportunity for healing in the best way I knew how at that moment. Studies are listened. They listened. Those who felt comfortable shared their political views. No one explicitly stated that they voted for Donald Trump, although they talked about how their families had. I could relate as I had family members who did as well. We worked through our confusion about this. They asked me what to do, how to handle what they were seeing happening in schools. I didn’t have answers as I sat there vulnerable with them in this moment. The only thing I could muster up was don’t stay silent. I did ask the class to be aware of what was happening on our campus. I sent them several emails the next few days about events organized by students’ who had been and will continue to be marginalized under the Trump Administration (and their allies). None of these dialogues or lessons that we had the last day of class was a part of my syllabus or my objectives. I was very aware that I could have easily offended a student or been scrutinized on my end-of-semester evaluations for these political conversations (which I was not). But when the personal is political, this doesn’t always matter.1
Kyle’s Narrative
In the fall semester of 2016, on the cusp of one of the most divisive presidential elections in recent history. I began co-teaching the first ever graduate-level course at my institution on the topic of critical Whiteness. Located in the heart of “Trump Country,” the Mid-West university where this class was held is home to mostly White, upper-middle class students. Through exploring the literature and observing race dynamics on my campus, I discovered that White students were ill-equipped for conversations about race in the classroom and as a result, students of Color are often forced to put their own learning aside to teach about race (Linder, 2015; Reason, 2015). As a Ph.D. student, I designed the Whiteness course alongside a faculty mentor with the hopes of engaging future educators in conversations about race and racism in the United States. The goal of the course was “to explore individual, historical, and systemic conceptions of Whiteness” and “consider how critical perspectives on Whiteness impact the development of equitable communities within higher education and student affairs” (EDL660 Course Syllabus, Fall 2016).
Sitting around a large oak wooden table, nearly all fourteen students in my Whiteness class were buzzing with excitement about this reading. They had never heard the story of Bacon's Rebellion and were unaware of the specific ways in which Whiteness and race were created out of thin air. Many commented that having this historical context finally explained what is meant by the “social construction of race,” which was vague...
and confusing for them before the reading. Additionally, they said, it demonstrates how White privilege does not result from intentionally oppressing People of Color, but rather from granting special opportuni-
ties to White people. Still early in the semester and un-
sure about how the White students in the class would react to a class on critical Whiteness, my co-instructor and I were thrilled that the students were making the connections from the reading that we’d hoped they would.

Taking the conversation a step further, my co-instructor drew a parallel between the divide-and-conquer tactics used by the wealthy European colonists during Bacon’s Rebellion and the political strategy used by Donald Trump to pit poor southern White people against Mexican immigrants. In his presidential announcement speech on June 16, 2015, Trump said, “When Mexico sends its people, they’re not sending you their best. They’re not sending you your friends. They’re sending people that have lots of problems, and they’re bring-
ing those problems with us. They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists.” (Ye He Lee, July 8, 2015). Despite the lack of any factual evidence for this claim, Trump leveraged White peoples’ fear of immigrants to effectively capture the allegiance of many of White Americans. My co-instructor’s comment provided an opportunity to discuss political topics in the course, including fear of disagreement with the instructor, uncertainty about their political stances, and the racial discomfort they likely hit close to home for many of our students. Indeed, on numerous occasions throughout the semester, our students commented about how they struggled to talk with their family members about White privilege and racism because they held differing political views. Given the volatility of the political climate in our country at the time and the very real potential for any conversa-
tion about the presidential election to result in conflict, our students chose to remain silent. Assuming that the political is indeed personal, my co-instructor’s comment about Trump’s racist campaign rhetoric likely hit close to home for many of our students. Indeed, on numerous occasions throughout the semester, our students commented about how they struggled to talk with their family members about White privilege and racism because they held differing political views. Given the volatility of the political climate in our country at the time and the very real potential for any conversation about the presidential election to result in conflict, our students chose to remain silent.

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ing on Trump’s racist campaign strategies or even offering a different political perspective regarding Hillary Clinton’s racist “Super Predator” campaign and the support of her husband’s racist policies, which have enabled the most violent mass incarceration of Black bodies in American history (Alexander, 2012), our students remained silent. After the awkwardness of the silence set in, one of the students redirected the conversation by noting that she had never really thought about the intersectionality of race and gender. Disappointed, my co-instructor and I allowed the students to return to their intellectual conversation, leaving the political issue in the corner of the room like an unacknowledged elephant standing next to an unacknowledged donkey.

Given the volatility of the political climate in our country at the time and the very real potential for any conversation about the presidential election to result in conflict, our students chose to remain silent.

Critical Whiteness Revisited

Aronson and Ashlee’s understandings of CWS aided them not only in their curriculum development, but also in analyzing their experiences. In teaching, they both emphasized the importance of starting any conversation on Whiteness and White supremacy through a sociocultural historical lens and discussing how this impacts the material benefits and privileges White people still maintain (e.g., generational wealth through housing loans, Witt, 2017). Importantly, they also analyzed their own roles in complicating the individual from the systemic. As White people doing anti-racist work, it can be easy to fall into complicity or deny the influence of the us/them binary (e.g., overt racists from ‘good Whites’) created, that they too, so desperately want to separate themselves from. However, a CWS theoretical framework posits that White people working toward racial justice must continuously ‘check’ their own par-
ticipation in Whiteness because they are not free from White supremacy until systemic racism is dismantled. This means White educators must continue to navigate feelings of hopelessness leading to dread. They must also grip tightly to the hope that a continuous critical examination of Whiteness may one day lead to racial liberation.

There will be ups and downs. As daunting as a reality this may seem, it obviously can never compare to the experiences people of Color face every day. White higher education instructors must always keep this rel-
ative truth at the forefront of their work, as a reminder of their privilege to ignore race as a motivation to continue the struggle. While White educators have been learning, unlearning, and relearning about Whiteness, the authors hold a sort of insider knowledge: they not only analyze their own roles in complicating the individual from the systemic, but also analyzed their own roles in complicating the individual from the systemic. As White people doing anti-racist work, it can be easy to fall into complicity or deny the influence of the us/them binary (e.g., overt racists from ‘good Whites’). They too, so desperately want to separate themselves from White supremacy until systemic racism is dismantled. This means White educators must continue to navigate feelings of hopelessness leading to dread. They must also grip tightly to the hope that a continuous critical examination of Whiteness may one day lead to racial liberation.

Lessons Learned: Implications for Future Educators

The idea that hope alone will transform the world, and action undertaken in that kind of naiveté, is an excellent route to hopelessness, White supremacy, and fatalism. But the attempt to do without hope, in the struggle to improve the world, as if that struggle could be reduced to calculation of acts alone, or a purely scientific approach, is a frivo-

lous illusion. (Freire, 1997, p. 8, as cited in Duncan-An-
дрade, 2009, p. 181)
Reflecting on the authors’ narratives, which of course come from the perspective of racially-White educators, reveals the important tension between dread and hope. Aronson was left with a somber feeling about her role as an educator, actively working to refuel her reservoir amidst feelings of hopelessness after the election. Ashlee on the other hand, expressed learning from moments that “fell flat” in the classroom, fostering optimism about engaging students in political reflection and transformative action. The opposing realities of these two narratives demonstrate the complexity of being an educator in today’s turbulent political climate.

On the one hand, there may be an overwhelming sense of dread about the realities of racism and White supremacy, which White educators perpetuate despite their best efforts. On the other hand, it can be empowering to leverage the privilege White educators hold to dismantle systemic oppression through an active critical examination of Whiteness. Rather than an immobilizing duality, these disparate truths provide educators with an expansive opportunity to facilitate profound learning and growth, for themselves and their students.

Duncan-Andrade (2009) offers a form of critical hope which rejects staying fixed in a state of despair by becoming committed to the struggle for justice. Building from Tupac Shakur’s (1999) Roses that Grow From Concrete, he suggests a form of “audacious hope” that demands “solidarity to share in others’ suffering, to sacrifice self so that other roses may bloom, to collectively struggle to replace the concrete completely with a rose garden” (p. 186). With this understanding, dread and hope combine and are transformed into action.

The perceived hopeless struggles faced by many communities of Color, including systemic racism and poverty, must first be acknowledged and understood by White educators. Only after this acknowledgement becomes a consistent practice can White educators attempt to align themselves in solidarity with people of Color (we cannot simply claim “allyship”). This process of leaning into dread, which includes White educators confronting Whiteness, White privilege, and White supremacy, leads to hope through collective struggle. CWS gives White educators a place to start in their own critical self-reflection and in turn, their teaching. White educators have a responsibility to foster “audacious hope,” engaging future teachers and student affairs professionals in the process of suffering, solidarity, and struggle.

White educators cannot fall prey to singular narratives of either dread or hope. Despite the messiness, both worldviews are necessary to prepare future educators for a world that systemically oppresses Black and Brown students while simultaneously privileging White students. Replacing the concrete of White supremacy with the roses of collective struggle will not happen if White educators throw their hands up in despair and complacency. Nor will it happen if they evasively ignore the realities of racism and hope that mere good intentions are enough. Both dread and hope are necessary because either alone is insufficient. When White educators and their students feel discouraged, they must utilize hope to move forward. When hope clouds their ability to recognize their own complacency in White supremacy, they must recognize dread and be in solidarity with people of Color.

At a time when the President of the United States espouses “All Lives Matter” (Levitz, 2016) because of a willing ignorance and support of White nationalistic efforts (as evidenced by his selection of Steve Bannon and Jeff Sessions), along with his unwillingness to name the events in Charlottesville as acts of White supremacy, violence and rage, educators can no longer feign neutrality, pretending these conversations hold no place in classrooms. Nicole Truesdell (2017), the Director of Academic Diversity and Inclusiveness at Beloit College, recently argued there is a contradictory nature of being apolitical in classrooms by faculty who are hired to teach about institutional racism. Many higher education instructors are hired to do this sort of work, and others must recognize the contradictions caused when they are asked to “stay neutral” in the classroom. This façade is unrealistic, and the authors’ personal narratives are prime examples of the need to address political issues, especially those situated around race and racism, in the classroom. Despite the challenges that arise, White educators must persist in transgressing the dehumanizing depoliticization of the classroom, for their own liberation and the liberation of their students.

Aronson and Ashlee revealed vulnerability and failures throughout their teaching, which have led them to understand that both dread and hope are vital. In teaching future educators and through critical self-reflection, they are committed to creating space for the learning that can occur when the tension between dread and hope is foregrounded. Rather than cancelling each other out, these opposing truths build upon each other creating something new, something radical, and something audacious. Indeed, this new “audacious hope demands that we reconnect to the collective by struggling alongside one another, sharing in the victories.” (Duncan-Andrade, 2009, p. 190). White educators must be committed to sharing the pain of and they must continue striving for the victories.

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References:
Can be found at the end of this special issue.

Suggested Citation:
Navigating the Unknown
Experiences of International Graduate Students From Muslim Majority Countries in the Current Political Climate

When international students from Muslim majority countries enroll in U.S. colleges and universities, they enter unwelcoming national, local, and campus environments. Graffiti threats like, “kill all Muslims,” found at Virginia Tech and the execution-style murders of three Muslim students at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill exemplify how anti-Muslim sentiment, prejudice, and violence—perpetuated by political rhetoric—continues to worsen on college campuses. Specifically, the international graduate student population deserves special attention as they make up approximately one-quarter of the total graduate student population in U.S. postsecondary education (Okahana, 2017). In addition, these students’ adverse experiences result in challenging identity development involving negotiation of heritage culture and dominant U.S. culture, mental health concerns, and a sense of not belonging (Ali, 2014; Atri, Sharma, & Cottrell, 2006-2007; Dey, 2012; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007; Stubbs & Salle, 2013). In fact, 59 percent of graduate students withdraw from their degree program prematurely (Nerad & Cerny, 1993; Strayhorn, 2012). Assessing sense of belonging is necessary to shed light on the lived experiences and success for this student population.

The history of higher education is not distinct from that of U.S., and the national identity of this country has a foundation of systemic oppression (Spring, 2016). This problematic history is illustrated through colonization of Native Americans, enslavement of African Americans, and exclusionary immigration policies implemented to discriminate and oppress minoritized ethnic groups. International graduate students from Muslim majority countries experience these systemic structures when they arrive in the U.S., and it is impossible to discuss their sense of belonging without examining how systems of oppression impact their experiences. Howard-Hamilton, Cuyjet, and Cooper (2011) defined oppression as an act of control to politically, as well as economically, disadvantaged individuals. Furthermore, Hardiman, Jackson, and Griffin (2007) described oppression as a phenomenon where a social group or organization, subconsciously or consciously, marginalizes other groups for their gain. In the U.S. context, current policies and laws create and maintain acts of oppression through forms of discrimination, exploitation, and marginalization. For instance, the Executive Order 13769 (2017), Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the U.S., was created to intentionally restrict the travel of non-citizens, visitors, and residents from seven Muslim-majority countries. This order targeted individuals labeled as dangerous’ and continued to oppress those of Arab and Muslim identities who did not pose a threat to the U.S.

Historic and current U.S. policies continue to exclude and target marginalized groups; these policies have induced subsequent influences that shape the climate on college campuses. National policies of exclusion, such as the Executive Order, exacerbate the long-standing issues of racism and anti-immigrant sentiment, which often negatively influence the sense of belonging of students. Considering the current sociopolitical climate and the very limited literature on this student population (e.g., McDermott-Levy’s 2011; Tummalala-Nana & Claudius’s 2013), this study highlights the experiences of a select few international graduate students from Muslim-majority countries. This study analyzes the experiences of international graduate students from Muslim-majority countries at Midwestern University (MU), aPredominantly White Institution (PWI) in the current sociopolitical environment. The research question focused on how the sociopolitical climate in the U.S. affected sense of belonging for this student population. The purpose of this study is to disrupt the silencing of graduate students from Muslim-majority countries and give a platform to their lived experiences as college students in the U.S.

Literature Review

International Graduate Student Experiences

International students are those not considered residents of their country of study and are enrolled at an accredited institution on a temporary visa (Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development [OECD], 2013; World Education News and Reviews [WENR], 2009). More specifically, international graduate students are nonresidents of their country of study with a bachelor’s degree who are seeking additional education through a master’s, doctoral, or professional degree program (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). In fall 2016, over one million masters and doctoral students were enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions, 24% of whom (283,496 students) were international students (Okahana, 2017).

International students face a myriad of challenges when coming to the United States to study, including, but not limited to: cultural adjustment difficulties, limited English proficiency, separation from friends and family, immigration issues, and integration into unfamiliar educational systems (Akhtar, 2011; Church, 1982; Duns & Poyrazli, 2011; Kilinc & Granell, 2003; Mori, 2000; Wedding, McCartney, & Currey, 2009). In comparison to their typically younger, single undergraduate counterparts, international graduate students experience more difficulty with acculturation, family-related stress, and increased financial difficulties.
White supremacy is “a historically based, institutionally to ensure the privilege and power of White supremacy. policies, “ which have existed and been enforced in the regarding immigration, also known as “gatekeeping The Influence of White Supremacy (Council of American-Islamic Relations [CAIR], 2017). were identified either by their race or their country of cases between 2014 and 2016; targets of hate crimes against Muslims and a 65% increase in anti-Muslim bias in their 2017 report a 584% increase in hate crimes Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) reported religious identity amongst participants. Further, the quantitative study about Muslim students is loosely applicable. This study pants of this study are from Muslim majority countries, Existing literature about international graduate students and Muslim students is helpful in laying the foundation for this research. However, the current political climate adds a layer of complexity that was not present in any previous studies. Although the particippants of this study are from Muslim majority countries, not all of them identify as Muslim, therefore literature about Muslim students is loosely applicable. This study seeks to fill the void that exists at the intersection of international graduate students from Muslim majority countries and their sense of belonging in a politically hostile environment, currently orchestrated by Trump’s administration. Conceptual Framework: Sense of Belonging of Graduate Students Several factors can influence a student’s experience through higher education and among these is a campus climate where students feel they belong and are valued (Kuh, 2001). Strayhorn defined the sense of belonging as “a feeling of connectedness, that one is important or matters to others” (Strayhorn, 2012, p. 1). Strayhorn’s empirical research focuses on addressing a gap in the literature about the underlying causal factors that impact the sense of belonging among graduate students, the most important of these factors being socialization. Agents of socialization, such as faculty members and peers serve as sources of influence for individuals in their process to acquire knowledge and skills. Successful socialization allows individuals to not only develop skills and competencies but is also necesssary to fully immerse individuals within the program of study and help positively influence student success, outcomes, and overall sense of belonging. Findings gathered from Strayhorn’s (2012) empirical study suggest persistence among graduate students is largely attributed to a sense of belonging in their communities, and connections to others in the graduate department or professional field. There are important distinctions between undergraduate and graduate student experiences; specifically, graduate students face statistically higher challenges with persistence (Henderson & Perry, 1993; Strayhorn, 2012). Considering 50% of graduate students withdraw prematurely, assessing the sense of belonging among graduate students is necessary to improve student success and motivations for this student population. Assessing a student’s sense of belonging can help in understanding their perceived feelings of acceptance within the campus climate. The re-searchers examined how MU engages and fosters a sense of belonging according to Strayhorn’s definition among international graduate stu-dents from Muslim majority countries through the lens of
the graduate student socialization theory and sense of belonging constructs. With isolation and fear already existing for Muslim and Arab populations, particularly in the U.S. context, the researchers’ aim was to discover how the international graduate student population made sense of their belonging at MU.

addition, the storytelling element of narrative design allows the lived experiences of students to be centered, which is an important factor considering the historical silencing of this population.

units on MU’s campus (Creswell, 2015). Select members of the research team emailed these student organizations and academic units to explain the purpose of the study and how interested students could participate. In addition to direct communication, the researchers sought to implement snowball sampling in order to

Research Design
Using a critical perspective, based on critical social theory, is important while analyzing the way power and justice manipulate social systems that affect individuals (Kincheloe, McLaren, Steinberg, & Monzó, 2017). The researchers decided on a critical narrative inquiry approach to address the systemic issues at play in the participants’ stories. Therefore, a narrative inquiry is the most appropriate methodological approach to bring forth the voices of these international graduate students. In narrative research, the data collected consists of the stories and experiences of individuals and how interacting with others in their environment affects their everyday experiences. This design allowed the researchers to analyze the participants’ sense of belonging on campus, explore commonalities in their experiences, and understand how systems of oppression affect students in everyday life at MU (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In

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Table 1
Participant Demographics

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Setting
The research team sought to interview students at MU in order to collect and understand their experiences within this higher education setting. MU is a large, public institution with a total student population between 45,000 and 50,000, including both undergraduate and graduate students. International students make up approximately 15% of the total student body at MU, with about 2,700 international graduate students. A small percentage of the 2,700 international graduate students encompassed those from Muslim majority countries.

Sampling
Recruitment of participants was established through purposeful sampling techniques, including contact with various student organizations, specifically those with missions to serve Muslim and/or international graduate students, as well as a majority of academic

Data Collection
The researchers performed semistructured interviews (Creswell, 2015) focusing on the participants’ stories to hold to the tenants of narrative qualitative research. Interviews were scheduled with one member of the research team, which lasted approximately 60 minutes, were held in a private space in a public building, and were audio recorded for transcription. Each interview started with seven predetermined questions, with the flexibility to divert from the questions, ensuring collected data was consistent with participants’ lived experiences rather than the researchers’ preconceived ideas of their experiences. The nature of these questions aimed to understand students’ perceptions about their sense of belonging at MU given their identities and experiences. Additionally, participants were asked to create their own pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Data Analysis
After the completion of each interview, the interviewer transcribed the content verbatim based on the audio recording, utilizing the software Kaltura. After ensuring correct transcription, the raw data from the interviews were then coded by two separate researchers. The research team implemented a generic systematic coding process as outlined by Cooper and Shelley (2009), drawing heavily on open coding to initially categorize the information. To minimize the effects of carrying over any preconceived notions regarding interview content, the researcher who conducted and transcribed an interview did not code the interviews. The first coding member identified initial themes within the transcription, and the second coding member reviewed these emergent themes and made notes on discrepancies identified by the first. Axial coding was used to connect the various themes found in the data as well as to identify central themes and peripheral themes (Cooper & Shelley, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). After the coding process was completed, the researchers met to review the transcripts and identified themes and to collectively discuss any discrepancies that arose.

Trustworthiness
In this study, the research team utilized three central methods to increase the trustworthiness of the study findings: two-person coding, member checking, and

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external auditing. This two-person method ensured that themes identified from the interview matched across multiple perspectives and mitigated bias. In addition, the team engaged in member checking by inviting participants to review and edit the transcript of their interview and findings to ensure accuracy. Finally, two external auditors were invited to review the study throughout the process and assist in evaluating the project at its conclusion. In addition, a logbook of this process was kept as an audit trail of those interacting with the data and increase trustworthiness (Merriam, 2002). After the completion of the study, the audio recordings were deleted.

The researchers intentionally used the concept of mindful inquiry presented by Bentz and Shapiro (1998), which emphasizes that the identities of researchers are always present in research and researchers should be mindful of this in their studies. All six members of the research team identify as domestic students and have not experienced being international students from Muslim majority countries. Therefore, the researchers engaged in intentional reflection about their individual and group identities throughout the research process.

**Limitations**

The transferability of this study is a limitation because the findings cannot be broadly applied to the greater population of international graduate students from Muslim majority countries; the sample size is only a limited number of participants from Muslim majority countries. Therefore, the researchers always present in research and researchers should be mindful of this in their studies. All six members of the research team identify as domestic students and have not experienced being international students from Muslim majority countries. Therefore, the researchers engaged in intentional reflection about their individual and group identities throughout the research process.

**Findings**

The findings of this study reveal the student experiences of nine international graduate students from Muslim majority countries at MU. Uncovering these narratives brings a different perspective to campus environments, including a vast range of experiences summarized with a quote by Diana:

>I bring something different to the table … [international graduate students] always have something very different to say. We come from very different backgrounds, political systems in our countries work differently … The culture is different and so there is always something new we can bring to the table.

The researchers identified four themes persistent throughout the participants’ stories: ambassadorship of international students, influence of faculty and staff on sense of belonging, opportunities and complications building meaningful relationships, and fear and uncertainty in the current political climate. These themes all relate to how the participants experience a sense of belonging (or not) at MU. A summary of the participants’ demographics is included in Table 1.

**Ambassadorship of International Students**

Several participants expressed that international graduate students serve as ambassadors or educators on campus, teaching others about their culture. One participant, Sarah, lived in the United States as a child and had been in the United States for over seven years as a graduate student. In her interview, she discussed her experience of feeling like she is a part of both U.S. and Saudi Arabian cultures, stating:

>I feel like I'm part of both cultures and I feel like the U.S. is my country and Saudi is my country … I always feel that I’m responsible for building a bridge between them because that’s where I live. I live on that bridge, and there are a lot of people that should be on that bridge that are still trying to choose between two places when we’re really, just all of us are one big mix.

Ilias shared similar thoughts, also using a bridge metaphor and expressing the role of international students to create “bridges between different countries.” Three participants also noted the burden of serving as a role model to undergraduate students with similar national and religious identities, both domestic and international. Sarah noted that within their role in cultural student organizations, they “wanted [Saudi students] to feel proud of their identity and [they] wanted them to feel like they can be part of this community and be with themselves and at the same time, be an MU student.” The duality of the responsibility of being a bridge to both the outside community and members of their own community is certainly a burden for many international students, yet one in which some international students find a sense of belonging and purpose.

However, participants complicated this theme of ambassadorship by expressing that they are not sure that the burden of this should fall on international students. Several participants noted that they should not have to serve in this role. Combating the stereotypes produced in the media about those from Muslim majority countries can be difficult and draining. Sam shared his thoughts on the burden of having to consistently combat others’ perceptions:

>Because [I'm from] Iraq it is hard for me to get a visa to fly almost anywhere—it's hard to get a visa.

**Influence of Faculty and Staff on Sense of Belonging**

All the participants spoke about how their interactions with faculty and staff impacted their sense of belonging, but responses varied depending on the participant and whether or not these interactions positively or negatively impacted their sense of belonging. Every participant stressed that they felt a greater sense of belonging to their academic school than to MU as a whole. Participants identified faculty, advisors, academic school-based support services, and the staff at the International Student Support Office (ISSO) as sources of support. Overall, participants identified that campus support...
services met their basic needs as international students. One participant, Mustafa, stressed his appreciation for offices like the ISSO and international student support in the School of Law by telling a story of how his law advisor helped him apply for internships and get approval for a modified exam schedule. He stated, “I think it’s important to keep you welcomed. You know, if you have a problem, you know where to go.” Participants spoke favorably of their academic advisors, with one participant, Sarah, saying that her advisor always tried to make her feel comfortable and welcome. “I am really, really blessed that my advisor actually has some international experience and that is where he and I really clicked … I think he is the best thing that I got out of this whole department.” Two participants also mentioned the “All Are Welcome” posters some faculty and staff keep in their offices as positive messages, stating that these made them feel like they belong.

Some participants stated resources on campus went above and beyond to support them, yet others felt that support was focused more on practical needs like paperwork than on support that addressed their sense of belonging. One participant emphasized that ISSO staff approached international students with a deficit mindset by assuming that international students need help with everything or that every international student has the same set of needs. Several noted resources on campus went to international peers, stating that these made them feel like they belong.

Opportunities and Complications Building Meaningful Relationships

Participants identified that their experiences with U.S. culture at MU impacted their sense of belonging and ability to build meaningful relationships. Many international graduate students in the study experienced emotional culture shock when leaving their home countries and arriving at a PWI in the Midwest. “You know, the international city is a small city, very very quiet … I don’t know but when I came here I feel like shock, it’s not what I imagined in like the nation” was Iliaz’s thought when he first arrived at the institution. In her interview, Daria reflected on her visit to the United States. A fellow international student asked if she felt as though she belonged on campus, and she responded: “And the first thing that crossed my mind was that it’s a White institution, why would I belong here?” Although this sentiment of shock was expressed by several participants, several also spoke about the opportunity to engage in programming that helped ease the transition and form relationships.

Five participants spoke or alluded to difficulty building and maintaining meaningful relationships with domestic students at MU. Diana noted, “One interesting thing is that most of my friends are international students and not Americans.” Six other participants echoed this sentiment of having more ease connecting with international peers. Mustafa stated: “It is difficult in this country to make friends with Americans. So, sometimes, like most of the time, if I want to hang out or just do fun activities, I go with friends from my country or, you know, who speak my language. I know a lot of international students in the law school and I have friends, but Americans, I’ve found it’s difficult. Just classmates, but not friends.”

Joey explained that conversing with domestic students was challenging because they didn’t “have time to speak” or were “not familiar with second language people, how they are speaking.” Sam shared an example of losing a relationship he had formed with a domestic student after a news story broke of an Arab man who drove a pickup truck down a bicycle path near the World Trade Center, killing eight and injuring twelve people.

So there was a guy [domestic student] for two days he didn’t talk to me. I don’t know, I thought that he just feel bad or something, but then I [asked] a mutual friend “What’s wrong with that guy?” He said, “He’s just upset about New York,” and I said, “Oh, but why he’s not talking to me if he’s upset about New York?” So that’s a shocking to me really like a shock … The problem is I know that guy. We laugh together, we take class together, and yeah, so his reaction, I never spoke with him again to be honest.

This example is the reality of international students from Muslim-majority countries because of the rhetoric and stereotypes that exist about Arab culture in the United States. Building relationships in college is difficult, but this population faces more hurdles in accomplishing the same task in comparison to their domestic peers.

Fear and Uncertainty in the Current Political Climate

When asked how the current political climate impacts their sense of belonging, participants disclosed varying degrees of fear and uncertainty. Some participants expressed feeling extremely scared to be in the United States, while others felt there was no need to feel afraid at all. A factor that contributed to participants’ elevated fear is the Islamophobia that exists in the United States. For example, Sarah felt the need to protect her children in the current climate: “I still felt the repercussions of September 11th and I still felt that I needed to protect my kids … I am not joking that there were many nights …” she shared. “I sleep one foot out of the bed and one foot on the bed with the lights on, and I was ready in case I heard anything.”

And another participant, Ilias, mentioned that he is concerned about political rhetoric validating Islamophobia, especially amongst Trump supporters. Ilias also expressed that Islamophobia caused great fear for women, concluding that Muslim women have a harder time feeling safe because their hijab identified them as Muslim; he mentioned knowing a woman who is too afraid to wear her hijab. Ibrahim shared his opinion on the experience of women who wear hijab: “Women here, who wear hijab or acting as a Muslim, have many difficulties more than me. I notice that with colleagues and with my wife as well. They feel not as comfortable as us.” At least two female-identifying participants expressed that Ilias’ words can be attributed to female-identifying participants’ fear of outwardly identifying themselves through elements such as religious attire.

Although higher degrees of fear were a concern for several participants, others expressed having lower levels of fear. Ilias, a student in the School of Law, said he feels safe because of the government’s checks and balances—he feels everyone is protected by the law and that studying the law of the United States gives him a sense of security. Ilias said he is not afraid of President Trump because “no one person runs the country.”

Feelings of fear related to uncertainty were also mentioned by participants. Six participants expressed feelings of uncertainty regarding their abilities to obtain visas, their abilities to go home and have their loved ones come to the United States, and postgraduation opportunities. Sam expressed the level of uncertainty by stating: “I’m doing a masters or to continue Ph. D., and I’m genuinely thinking that I should apply [outside of the United States] or maybe Germany or some-thing. I don’t want to stay because I thought the situation would change, but at the end of the day this is really bad. And based on today’s okay, and tomorrow there might be a ban, and then I will not be able to go to United States. I wasn’t traveling but I know of friends that were traveling to visit their families they couldn’t get back and you know what happens with the airports and courts.”
Several participants were also sure to mention that personal safety and feelings of fear are not new phenomena due to the current political climate, noting difficulties obtaining visas and extensive airport security screenings as examples of preexisting challenges. The United States has experienced Islamophobic sentiment for an extended period. Participants disclosed that Arab and Muslim people already do not feel safe in the United States and the current political climate simply exacerbates their fear.

Discussion

Together, the four themes explore how participants conceptualize their sense of belonging at MU and how both the campus and sociopolitical climates impact their student experience. The first two themes, ambassadorship and influence of faculty and staff, focus on how campus life influences their sense of belonging. Every participant noted that they feel a stronger sense of belonging within their academic department than at MU at large. Specifically, participants expressed the importance of culturally responsive faculty. Several participants noted that faculty regularly bring up global current events in the classroom or reach out to ask about their families. These examples demonstrate a sense of belonging within academic departments. For these participants, supported by Strayhorn’s (2012) assertions that graduate students seek and find support from agents of socialization such as faculty, staff, and advisors. Faculty and staff members can support student socialization by acknowledging the ways outside factors affect the student experience and show support with simple acts such as displaying posters, holding time outside of class for discussion, and sending supportive emails. Almost all participants mentioned that these displays were comforting and helped students discern what staff/faculty members were supportive, which is key to student persistence and sense of belonging (Strayhorn, 2012). Additionally, participants noted that their sense of belonging is hindered by feeling like a temporary presence at MU, further adding to the feeling of belonging on the outskirts of campus life and that they never have a permanent role in the fabric of MU.

The second set of themes moved beyond MU and focused on how outside factors affected the participants’ sense of belonging. Students spend the majority of their time on campuses, but it is important to make the distinction between how the local and national environments can have a significant impact on students. The participants spoke about their experiences with general American culture and the ways others perceived their belonging based on the current political climate. Specifically, several students referenced the rhetoric of the 2016 presidential election, which impacted them in negative ways. The participants’ reported being fearful of what could happen while walking down the street or interacting with domestic students. There was a distinct difference in the way students perceived their fear and this was largely related to their gender identification. Most of the male students stated that they felt a level of fear but recognized that their physical appearance may not always make it clear that they are from a Muslim-majority country or have certain religious beliefs. Conversely, the women stated a greater level of fear, specifically the women who wore religious identifying garments. Additionally, the researchers noticed a pattern for students who attended the law school in regard to feelings of security and support. Knowledge of U.S. laws and regulations helped alleviate some of the fears that were present after news of the travel ban. Aside from fear, many of the students also discussed being in a state of constant uncertainty relating to the executive orders. Fear and a sense of uncertainty can cause serious distress for international graduate students, especially when considering their plans for the future. While institutions are focused on creating supportive environments for international graduate students, they must also focus on cultural differences, ethnic origin, and the ways identity (including gender) can affect students’ sense of belonging.

Implications

There are two sets of implications to improve the sense of belonging for this population: one for immediate action and one for broader consideration to address systemic problems that create an unwelcoming environment for this student population. On a daily basis, faculty and practitioners should continue the positive practices noted by the participants including actively voicing support for international students, creating meaningful relationships with students they advise and teach, and displaying symbols of support and cultural validation on campus and in text, including posters, flyers, and emails. A special emphasis should be given to educating faculty and advisors on culturally responsive practices because students consistently mentioned the importance of their academic units in their sense of belonging. Institutions should take this study as an impetus to examine conditions that maximize success for diverse student populations on their campuses. Although these practices have the potential to contribute to a greater sense of belonging for this student population, the researchers recognize that these recommendations focus on making an issue better without addressing the larger problem. The researchers acknowledge that these recommendations will not create a long-term change in campus and national culture in an environment built upon White supremacy. Throughout all the interviews, the researchers noted an underlying tone of the normalization of oppressive, isolating, and exclusionary practices, especially in how students discussed how the MU community does not see the value in investing in them. Participants spoke of exclusionary practices as normal and expected. This normalization is dangerous and should inspire action from those who seek to create more campuses where all students feel like they belong. To truly achieve a welcoming environment, a broader change of campus and national culture is needed.

Conclusion

This study exposes the stories of international graduate students from Muslim-majority countries in a particularly tumultuous time in the United States. Key findings reveal how their individual experiences of having a sense of belonging are influenced beyond the campus environment and extend to the broader political climate. Interviews with participants revealed that White supremacy is so ingrained at MU that the institution’s reaction to the executive orders was seen as significantly positive, considering that doing the bare minimum to support these students has become the norm. Support for this population of students should be seen continuously, not retroactively. Institutions have an obligation to create environments that allow all students to feel like they belong, not just students with dominant identities. It may be difficult for domestic students, staff, and faculty to comprehend the constant fear that is present for these students. This population exhibits resilience and resistance on a daily basis and it is time to reclaim their belonging within the higher education system.

*References: Can be found at the end of this special issue.

Suggested Citation:
Trump and an Anti-Immigrant Climate:

Implications for Latinx/Chicanx Undergraduates

Students of color have reported encountering significant challenges while entering and attending institutions of higher education (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Turner (1994) stated that students of color feel like strangers in some one’s house when referencing institutions of higher education. As a result of racism and anti-immigrant attitudes, scholars have identified that students of color experience hostile campus racial climates, a lack of sense of belonging, racial microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue (Hurtado, 1992; Smith, Allen, & Danley, 2007). The collegiate experience for students of color has been further negatively intensified by the era of President Trump’s administration with rhetoric and proposed policies that are anti-immigrant, Latinx/Chicanx, Muslim, Black, and LGBTQIA+. The rhetoric and policy positions of the Trump administration and like-minded individuals are nothing new in American society, but the delivery method has become anything but subtle. Universitites have experienced racist propaganda found on campus and a rise in controversial conservative guest speakers that have led to students across the nation protesting these events. For instance, at the institutions where this study took place, signs stating “STOP THE RAPES, STOP THE CRIMES, STOP THE MURDER, STOP THE BLACKS” were found the week before school started. Additionally, other signs were posted once the semester began that stated, “It’s Okay to be White.” In other words, as the political rhetoric has become blatant, actions targeting communities of color have followed suit.

Several of Trump’s proposed policies have targeted communities of color through bills that would prohibit Muslim refugees, end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), and deny rights to transgender individuals. Considering the immediate shock and heightened discussion of such policies among students, this paper investigates the impact of the rhetoric and anti-immigrant policies on Latinx/Chicanx undergraduate students leading up to the 2016 presidential election and after the election of Donald J. Trump. The paper uses the campus racial climate as a theoretical framework to understand their experiences on campus. The paper asks three questions:

1. What are the impacts on Latinx/Chicanx undergraduate students (on and off campus), regardless of documentation status, due to the election of Trump and the anti-immigrant and anti-Latinx/Chicanx rhetoric?
2. How has the campus racial climate for Latinx/Chicanx students been altered by the heightened discussion of potential anti-immigrant policies?
3. What are the intended and unintended consequences of the Trump-era discourse on the Latinx/Chicanx college student experience?

In the following section, we introduce racist nativism and its influence on political rhetoric and policy. Next, we cover how literature describes the Latinx/Chicanx student college experience. Then we delve into our study that draws from campus racial climate frameworks and literature. After presenting our methods and data sources, we present eight themes across all focus groups and end the paper by discussing the findings and the impact on Latinx/Chicanx students.

Nativism is defined by Hingham (1955) as an intense opposition to an internal underrepresented group because of fear it is foreign or “un-American.” Nativism has a connection to nationalism in the sense that nationalistic ideologies justify the fear “that some influence originating abroad threatens the very life of the nation within” (Hingham, 1955, p. 4 as cited in Huber, López, Malagon, Velez, & Solórzano, 2008). The discourse around nativism can be described as “dog whistle politics,” or a form of strategic racism spoken in code and targeting a specific audience (López, 2015). Such discourses emphasize racial divisions while masking themselves as “neutral.” For example, Attorney General Jeff Sessions justified the rescinding of DACA by stating that the program “denied jobs to hundreds of thousands of Americans [citizens] by allowing those same illegal aliens to take those jobs” (Shear & Davis, 2017). This fear is exacerbated when foreigners are racialized as Latinx/Chicanx and that traditional American values will be lost if overtaken by this growing minority population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Through this fear, racism becomes an important factor in how nativism is exercised where it begins to attack the Latinx/Chicanx community as non-native. During his presidential candidacy announcement, Trump played off of this fear by stating that “when Mexico sends its people … they’re not sending their best … They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists …” Racist nativism is then defined as assigning people of color, like the Latinx/Chicanx community, values that are perceived to be inferior to traditional native (White) values. Furthermore, racist

“Responses from students suggest the election of Trump and likeminded political leaders profoundly and negatively impact the campus climate for Latinx/Chicanx students.”

Exacerbation of Racist Nativism and Trump

We use Latinx/Chicanx instead of Mexican/Latino/a to disrupt the gender binary and be more inclusive and acknowledge the vast spectrum of gender and sexual identities. The x also politicizes language because it is purposeful in creating a more inclusive term while disrupting formal language structures that have excluded queer and transgender communities.
nativist rhetoric divert attention from social structures that maintain oppressive practices and exploit immigrant communities (Huber et al., 2008).

We argue that the Trump administration, as a result of the changing demographics in the United States, upholds these racist discourses and policies against people of color, immigrant communities, and other historically marginalized/minoritized groups. Through this discourse, there is a strong urgency to revert back to so-called traditional American values while assigning negative values to historically marginalized communities. Through this paper, we intend to look at how discourses of the Trump administration are impacting the sense of belonging for Latinx/Chicana/o students and how they experience the campus racial climate.

Latinx/Chicana/o Students and the College Experience

Studies have demonstrated that hostile campus racial climates create traumatic and unwelcoming experiences for Latinx/Chicana/o students (Franklin, Smith, & Hung, 2014; González, 2002). Many of these experiences are perpetrated by racial microaggressions (Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009) or the subtle, innocuous, preconscious, or unconscious degradation and putdowns aimed at reducing, diluting, atomizing, and encasing the hapless into their place. Additionally, Smith, Allen, and Danley (2007) correlated racial microaggressions to racist battle fatigue, or the stress responses due to constant exposure to racist microaggressions. These traumatic experiences contribute to why students of color report that the campus climate is more hostile compared to their White counterparts (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

Negative campus racial climates are facilitated by the institutional campus culture that often perpetuates prejudgment and discrimination, racial stereotypes, low expectations from teachers and peers, exclusions from the curriculum, and pedagogy that marginalizes and puts down students of color and, with it, the barriers they must navigate.

Furthermore, studies have also demonstrated that Latinx/Chicana/o students have to fulfill family commitments such as being caretakers and helping financially while in college (Cerezo, Lyda, Beristianos, Enríquez, & Connor, 2013; Kiyama et al. 2012). The campus racial climate is more oppressive for Latinx/Chicana/o students than for White students due to historical and contemporary exclusion (Hurta-do & Hurtado, 2007; Pérez and Sáenz (2017) interview students that feel unsafe, and experience lack of belonging, feel unsafe, and experience prejudice and discrimination, racial stereotypes, low expectations from teachers and peers, exclusions from the curriculum, and pedagogy that marginalizes and puts down students of color and, with it, the barriers they must navigate.

Theoretical Framework: Campus Racial Climate and Culture

To understand the impact of the Trump-era rhetoric on Latinx/Chicana/o student experiences, we use campus racial climate and culture literature as our theoretical framework. The campus racial climate and culture are often referenced when discussing the experiences of historically marginalized students on campus. However, there are important distinctions between the two. Sonórzano, Cep, and Yosso (2000) define the campus racial climate as the overall racial environment of the college campus, and this is supported by studies that have found that there are racial differences in the perceptions of campus climate (see Harper & Hurtado, 2007, for a review). The campus racial climate is more relevant to the experiences of students of color than the general campus climate because it is a racialized component to their postsecondary experience due to historical and contemporary exclusion (Hurta-do & Hurtado, 2007). The college campus has diverse campus climates negatively impact students’ sense of belonging, academic outcomes, and health outcomes (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Solórzano et al. (2000) stated that a positive racial campus climate includes at least four elements: (a) the inclusion of underrepresented students, faculty, and administrators; (b) a curriculum with an underlying historical context of people of color; (c) programs that encourage the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students of color; and (d) a university commitment to a racially diverse college campus. Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Allen, and Milmé (1998) and Milém, Chang, & Antonio (2005) provided a framework to understand campus climate that included organizational structures, histories, and external forces such as governmental policies and socialhistorical forces. The campus racial climate is focused on finding these discrepancies, measuring students’ attitudes, perceptions, observations, or interactions within the racial environment of their campus (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012).

Campus climate can change based on surroundings, perceptions, and times, campus culture is deeply embedded into institutions and takes a long time to change. Campus culture has been defined as “the institutional history, mission, physical settings, norms, traditions, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide the behavioral both individuals and groups in an institution (Kuh & Hall, 1993, p. 2). Additionally, the campus culture is manifested in the institution’s mission, traditions, language, interactions, artifacts, physical structures, and other symbols (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). In essence, campus culture is the shared values and norms that govern the institution and their decision making. Campus culture is intertwined with the decision-making of institutions, the effects of campus cultures are far reaching where the experiences of all their students are impacted by it at some level (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012).

Methods

Because the purpose of the paper was to identify how anti-immigrant rhetoric impacts Latinx/Chicana/o students and how they experience the campus racial climate, we utilized an interpretative approach. A qualitative approach allows for the examination of topics from the collection and analysis of detailed information (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). Qualitative research allows us to answer how, what, and why questions (Bhattacharya, 2017; Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). Final, qualitative techniques enable us to collect, analyze, and report rich information regarding how historical and contemporary discourses and rhetoric influence the undergraduate Latinx/Chicana/o experience.

Participant Selection

Participants in this study were selected purposefully to ensure a participant pool comprised of individuals who are likely to have experience with the phenomenon studied (Patton, 2002). We used sampling for intensity, snowball sampling, and personal network sampling to recruit participants. Sampling for intensity refers to seeking information-rich cases and snowball sampling provided us the opportunity to ask current participants to recommend other participants (Patton, 2002). One of the authors is a first-year coordinator and advisor in the Office for Equity and knew many of the students, which assisted with recruitment and was used extensively in sampling we employed. The sampling methods used ensured participants that could speak meaningfully about the institution and the experiences of Latinx/Chicana/o students.
Additionally, several participants mentioned how they felt the institution did not take into account the impact the rhetoric and election were having generally on historically marginalized students and their ability to perform academically.

This analysis resulted in eight themes: (1) power of political rhetoric and Trump; (2) coded language; (3) unsafe academic spaces; (4) racialization of immigration as a Latinx/Chicanx issue; (5) burnout, stress, and racial battle fatigue; (6) balancing academic commitments and social activism; (7) the reactive university; and (8) students doing the work of the administration. The themes presented below are not an exhaustive list of all the ways that Latinx/Chicanx students experience the campus racial climate.

Power of Political Rhetoric and Trump
Participants discussed the impact political rhetoric was having on their everyday experiences and academics before and after the election. For example, Vanessa (female), a senior getting ready to graduate, mentioned: I remember when Trump got elected, you know how it was at 3 a.m. or something, the next day I had an exam at eight in the morning and I went and I did it … I remember going to my teacher after he graded and I got like a C, so I was like, “Yeah I really couldn’t study or think for this test because of the election.” And he was just like, “Oh yeah …” I guess I couldn’t find the people that gave a fuck. Vanessa had been impacted heavily by Trump and his political rhetoric prior to the election. Once Trump was elected, the anxiousness and stress of the rhetoric and what it might mean for her friends and family negatively impacted Vanessa’s ability to focus and prepare for an exam and other academic responsibilities. This anxiousness and what it meant for the future was a common thread among participants.

Additionally, several participants mentioned how they felt the institution did not take into account the impact the rhetoric and election were having generally on historically marginalized students and their ability to perform academically.

Participants referenced how the political discourse impacted their perceptions of safety in certain spaces. For example, students protested the visit from Ben Shapiro, a conservative commentator, citing his rhetoric was harmful to the student body, campus racial climate, and attacked students of color, queer students, and trans students. By the institution allowing Ben Shapiro and his rhetoric on campus, several students indicated fearing for their safety. Roberto (male), a first-year student, described the day of Shapiro’s visit to campus:
There was tension in the air … you could feel it. I realized I was the only person of color there [near the auditorium where Ben Shapiro was speaking]. I felt like I was unsafe, like oh no, everyone is going to start looking at me. They were just like saying the rhetoric that Ben Shapiro was saying. I’m like this is not a safe space for me, I should head home. Roberto’s comments expressed the fear participants felt with the increased brazenness of anti-Latinx/Chicanx rhetoric on campus.

Coded Language
Participants identified the role of coded language in creating a hostile campus racial climate, especially when issues of immigration were discussed. Coded language was used to communicate that Latinx/Chicanx students were not welcome on campus and was rooted in racism, xenophobia, and American exceptionalism. Hector (male), a graduating senior, explained how general comments on campus were rooted in liberal politics and those making the statements often made the comments in a subtle way that created a hostile campus racial climate. Hector stated: It’s not directly anti-Latino, but this place is weird. All of the comments stinging racist hide behind anonymity and liberal politics that White people buy into that make them seem like they are not racist.

Brenda (female), a third-year student, participated in one of two focus groups lasting between 60 to 90 minutes. Prior to the focus groups, students were asked to fill out a brief demographic questionnaire. Focus groups were conducted using a semistructured protocol. Participants were asked general questions about what it is like to be a Latinx/Chicanx student at the institution and their perceptions of the campus racial climate before and after the election of Trump. Participants were also asked how they were impacted by the political rhetoric occurring that was seemingly anti-Latinx/Chicanx and immigrant. Interviewers asked probing questions to better understand how students view their experience at the institution and what it was like to be Latinx/Chicanx. Authors had participants pick pseudonyms to protect their identities.

Data Analysis
Each focus group was audio-taped and transcribed. Data was analyzed using methods described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Mustakakis (1994). HyperRESEARCH 2.8 qualitative data management software was used to organize, manage, and code the data. First, the authors created textual-structural descriptions to review each interview and to better understand how students experienced the campus racial climate (Mustakakis, 1994). Second, the authors utilized open and axial coding to generate themes and identify the corresponding elements of these thematic categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Specifically, open-coding procedures were utilized to identify eight themes that cut across the focus group transcripts. Using HyperRESEARCH, the authors generated a code report for each theme and then used axial coding techniques to identify salient properties of themes. The eight themes and related quotes are presented in the findings.

Trustworthiness
Methods suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1986) were used to strengthen trustworthiness of the findings. First, the authors triangulated multiple data sources including interview transcripts, HyperRESEARCH code reports, and researcher notes to develop and verify themes. Second, the authors utilized member checks to ensure researcher interpretations aligned with students’ perceptions and comments. Participants were invited to provide feedback on the findings of the data analysis. Finally, the authors continually reviewed and examined the data and themes to develop additional themes.

Limitations
At least three limitations should be noted. First, students were recruited through the multicultural center where one of the authors holds a full-time position. Second, because students were recruited from the multicultural center on campus, participants were already heavily involved in on-campus events and protests before and after the election. Thus, the experiences of participants in this study may differ from other Latinx/Chicanx students. Third, the majority of student participants were of Mexican descent, with only three participants identifying as Central or South American. We cannot draw conclusions of fellow students who self-identify as Latinx/Chicanx.
When discussing the climate, Brenda (female), a junior stated:

"When I think of the campus, I think of hidden racist that have particular language... they talk in a coded language, that start off sentences Americans think this... it's different to where you are on campus [language changes between colleges/academic departments]; it's also very subtle, but you can still catch it." Although many of the students talked about coded language and the campus racial climate and culture in general, Hector went on to describe a specific experience in the classroom. Hector compared a comment by his professor to what he would think of that professor absent of the comment. Hector stated:

"In my chemistry class the professor made a joke about the ways chemistry is used to track down criminals. In my chemistry class the professor made a joke that the acronym DEA stands for ' Dezapar A los Evasivos' [Dezapar a los Evasivos is Spanish for 'Dezapar a los Evasivos' which means 'Dezapar to the evaders']." Hector went on to describe a particular language in the classroom. There have been cases when we are talking about the benefits of immigration and immigration reform. And there have been times when people have spoken out aggressively and dehumanizing comments, something along the lines of "we should exterminate these people" is something I actually heard in the classroom when I was presenting... and the professor did NOTHING.

"Blue's quote is similar to other participants that expressed the classroom was often a contentious environment and climate when race and inequality were brought up. Some participants referenced the idea of "alternative facts" being more prevalent in the classroom."

"Gabriella (male), a graduating senior, described an incident with the president of the institution during a sit-in demanding Ben Shapiro not speak on campus due to the hostile climate his presence would create. Gabriella stated:

"When we were at the sit-in, one of the students told the president that they are afraid to go to class. His face is the exact same reaction the university has when anything happens, it is this clueless dumbfounded, 'I don't know what to do but I'm clueless.'"

Despite years of meeting with Latinx/Chicanx and other racial/ethnic student groups on campus about the unwelcoming campus racial climate and culture, the president continued to act unaware and confused.

Unsafe Academic Spaces

"Racialization of Immigration as a Latinx/Chicanx Issue"

Participants were critical of how students, staff, and faculty at the university were unaware of the complexities of immigration even though there is a center on campus that focuses on undocumented students and numerous yearly events bringing awareness to immigration issues. This theme manifested in university entities racializing immigration as strictly a Latinx/Chicanx problem and therefore as a topic that did not have to be addressed in certain spaces. For example, Juan (male), a senior elaborated:

"In terms of like immigration being racialized as Latinx, a lot of the people within the multicultural center completely dismiss it [issues around immigration], it's a lack of awareness because of its association as being Latinx. Universities are supposed to serve all students, but Juan reported how the racialization of immigration as a Latinx/Chicanx issue allowed several university entities, including the multicultural center, to pass on the opportunity to comfort and support students with multiple identities and who were undocumented. Instead, university offices relied on Latinx/Chicanx-centric programs/organizations and the Dream Center to address the undocumented community. Juan continued by giving an example of how even other progressive student organizations did the same. I am also a part of QTSSOC (Queer/Trans Student of Color), we met on the day DACA was rescinded and no one brought it up. Juan's comments demonstrated how even department and student groups that are meant to support historically marginalized students can contribute to feelings of being unwelcome on campus.

The racialization of immigration as Latinx/Chicanx also contributed to the "othering" and notion that students who pertain to that community are foreign. In other words, if let Latinx/Chicanx students know that they are not "native" and are not considered American. For example, Gabriella (who was born in the United States) described how Americans are racialized as White.

"They [White people] usually start sentences like, ‘Well, Americans think this.’ Gabriella is describing how his White peers contribute to othering Latinx/Chicanx communities as nonnative to the United States and thus their views are considered non-American.

Burnout, Stress, and Racial Battle Fatigue

Individuals identified that as a result of the anti-LatinX/Chicanx and immigrant rhetoric, the hostile campus racial climate created stress that was physically and emotionally draining. Luz (female), a senior, connected the stress she felt to other academic responsibilities:
It's like extra stress on top of like homework and work. It's a lot of shit to deal with. It's like psychologically and emotionally overwhelming. I have depression and anxiety so I'm taking medication for it. There is a pattern that I have noticed that when I'm away from school I am fine. You know, I'm good, but once I'm back in school all these things start hitting me at once. In terms of how I navigate, I started being selective of where I spend my time, who I talk to, what classes I even participate in, and what classes I don't. Sometimes I feel like there's no point in wasting my energy on these people who are not going to care about what I have to say.

Luz's experience echoed other students that highlighted they wanted to disengage from the campus and even changed majors to avoid certain spaces. For example, Luz commented:

"The Latinx/Chicano students in our study not only have to compete academically, but also have to survive and strive against hostile climates, culture, microaggressions, and racial battle fatigue, while civically engaging and advocating for their communities."
When you come to the university, initially all I thought I was going to focus on was my academic responsibilities, the same way I did in high school. You never think, “Oh I’m going to devote a lot of my time fighting administration and advocating for my community.” That was not initially what I thought about my college experience.

Glenda highlighted the different directions Latinx/Chicanx students are being pulled compared to their peers. For several of the participants, being a Latinx/Chicanx college student meant they had a deep responsibility to their communities and they demonstrated this commitment through social activism. Students expressed the toll that rhetoric and action/ inaction took on their level of energy, psychological health, and physiological health. Participants cited they were dealing with mental health issues that were heightened while attending the institution. These findings align with previous research on racial battle fatigue that found as a result of racial microaggressions, students experienced different types of stressors (Franklin et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2007; Yosso et al., 2009). Although there has been some scholarship on how discrimination and racism impact Latinx/Chicanx students (Franklin et al., 2014; Yosso et al., 2009), additional scholarship is needed. Furthermore, scholarship is needed to understand how institutions of higher education can support Latinx/Chicanx students and students of color after the Trump presidency.

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Discussion

Findings from this study contribute to the literature on contemporary experiences of Latinx/Chicanx college students. Students indicated that the election of Trump and like-minded political leaders profoundly and negatively impacted their perceptions of the campus racial climate and their sense of belonging to the institution. Student responses demonstrated there was a shift that occurred on campus as a result of the election that caused Latinx/Chicanx students to perceive the environment as physically and psychologically dangerous. Previous studies have highlighted the prevalence of negative campus racial climates and cultures (Hurtado & Carter, 1997), but participants in this study demonstrated that universities are sometimes complicit in the shift to greater anti-Latinx/Chicanx and immigrant rhetoric without proactive action. We want to acknowledge that campus racial climates have always been unwelcoming and hostile for people of color, but participants expressed the immediacy of the climate shift with the election of Trump.

Findings reflect previous studies that demonstrate the academic sphere of campuses are extremely hostile towards Latinx/Chicanx and students of color (Gonzalez, 2002; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, 1992; Yosso et al., 2009). Students highlighted how their peers, staff, and professors often perpetuated macro and microaggressions and/or failed to address such aggressions, which created a hostile campus racial climate. Furthermore, the rhetoric of Trump and his policies often seeped into classroom discussions and made students feel unwelcome. For Latinx/Chicanx students—and possibly other communities—these discussions often brought about unwanted emotional trauma in the classroom and even caused students to miss classes (e.g., some students indicated they missed classes the day DACA was rescinded).

Scholars have argued we witnessed a shift in racism from the overt racism of the Jim Crow era to a subtler, “color-blind” racism that is equally injurious to the everyday lives of people of color (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). Our findings partially challenge such assumptions when we see overt racism and xenophobia operating at the forefront of the daily lives of Latinx/Chicanx students with the election of Trump. Participants noted a specific shift from the color-blind racism they experienced to a more overt anti-Latinx/Chicanx discrimination during and after the election. Students provided examples of how the campus racial climate became increasingly hostile to their presence. Participants highlighted the institution only reacted to overt acts of discrimination and frequently failed to address any subtle forms of daily racism. As seen with the Ben Shapiro and other conservative talks on campuses around the country, institutions of higher education often cited freedom of speech reasoning for allowing such individuals to speak on campus. Such color-blind, ahistorical reasoning can be harmful to the sense of belonging of students of color and their health.

Students expressed the toll that rhetoric and action/ inaction took on their level of energy, psychological health, and physiological health. Participants cited they were dealing with mental health issues that were heightened while attending the institution. These findings align with previous research on racial battle fatigue that found as a result of racial microaggressions, students experienced different types of stressors (Franklin et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2007; Yosso et al., 2009). Although there has been some scholarship on how discrimination and racism impact Latinx/Chicanx students (Franklin et al., 2014; Yosso et al., 2009), additional scholarship is needed. Furthermore, scholarship is needed to understand how institutions of higher education can support Latinx/Chicanx students and students of color after the Trump presidency.

Fifth, we found that universities are putting a greater onus on students of color with institutional inaction. Several students could pinpoint the sit-in they participated is where they began to fall behind in their classes. Student activism and participation are sources of informal and knowledge production (Rhoads, 2009). Although these types of activities are fruitful, they can also have negative impacts on the emotional and psychological health of students (Rhoads, 2016). In further analyzing comments made by participants, we pose a question of what it would look like for institutions to acknowledge students’ labor of love for their community. Rhoads (2016) acknowledges the extra strains students take on; however, he also commends their work and the sophistication of the insights and forms of knowledge student activists glean from and acquire through their civic participation. Institutions need to be better at acknowledging and rewarding students who are taking on such extra work to better the campus climate and culture.

Conclusion

The findings in this paper demonstrate the complicating campus racial climates, cultures, and feelings that Latinx/Chicanx students had to navigate leading up to, during, and after the election of Trump. Latinx/Chicanx students have always faced hostile and unwelcoming climates, but students expressed that such occurrences have become more frequent and harsher. The focus groups illustrate what it takes to enroll, persist, and complete a degree in the current political climate. The Latinx/Chicanx students in our study not only have to compete academically, but they also have an obligation to be civically engaged and continuously advocate for their communities. Given the political and anti-Latinx/Chicanx climate, universities need to create programs and policies that are more inclusive of Latinx/Chicanx students. Furthermore, institutions of higher education need to proactively challenge micro-aggressions and Whiteness on campus that act as the catalyst for anti-Latina/Chicana immigrant rhetoric.

*References: Can be found at the end of this special issue.*

Suggested Citation:
It's as if my family's immigration status and experience lie delicately between the two kawayan, bamboo poles, and we've been dancing the tinikling with immigration ever since our arrival in the US. ICE sets the pace of how fast we should be dancing, how we weave through the poles as a family. Although it is in our blood, 15 years of dancing between the kawayan becomes tiring. Do we get to walk freely or are we forever bound and trapped to the confines of the kawayan?

Context from the Artist: Tinikling sa ICE

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