

LEADING WITH LOVE AND AUTHENTICITY: EXPERIENCES OF GAY LATINO AND
GAY BLACK ADMINISTRATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

As colleges and universities continue to grow; both in size and student diversity, current research demonstrates university administrators also need to diversify their senior leadership team. Senior higher education leaders also need to consider what diversity looks like at the executive level of institutions (i.e., chancellors, presidents, vice chancellors, deans, provosts). It is imperative for leaders in higher education to observe their own social identity dynamics to successfully lead teams and departments who employ individuals with intersecting identities. University leaders across the nation are also now being tasked to consider the role racism and homophobia plays in the development and retention of senior administrators.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to shed light on lived experiences of gay Latino and gay Black administrators (GLBA) and attempt to understand if and how universities support the professional experiences this population encounters in their day-to-day lives. This narrative study was conducted by interviewing four participants who all work or recently left employment at public higher education institutions. The participants identified as gay Latino and gay Black men and hold or have held a high-level administrator position at their respective campus. The themes that emerged from the data come from reflections and insights from the four participants currently in the field of higher education. To engage with their stories, *testimonio* was used as the methodological approach for presenting data. The purpose in using *testimonio* as a theoretical approach was to provide a much-needed understanding on how GLBA have built solidarity and resiliency through their professional experiences and resisted dominant culture by learning to love themselves and live their lives authentically. This study recommends university leaders look

at systematic barriers preventing senior GLBA from advancing and retaining and put strategies in place to ensure their success.

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The moment we choose to love we begin to move against domination, against oppression.

The moment we choose to love we begin to move towards freedom, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others. That action is the testimony of love as the practice of freedom. (hooks, 1994)

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Para mis padres

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“Échale ganas mi niño”

-La Lupe

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Two weeks prior to moving on campus to start my undergraduate journey at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) I began to dream of what my dormitory décor would entail. Visions of posters of Justin Timberlake and magazine cutouts of Abercrombie and Fitch models filled my walls. I knew at that moment for me to be my authentic self as a proud gay man, I needed to come out to my parents. This moment was challenging growing up in a typical immigrant Mexican household where cultural responsibilities like religion and pursuing the American Dream involved adhering to heteronormative practices. As the oldest of four boys, I knew the challenge and burden I was about to put on my parents as the first in my family to go to college. Although a tough conversation, I knew by telling my parents (the last in my family to know) of my gay identity, I was about to embark on a college journey to find myself.

In college, I went through self-exploration where I attempted to make sense of my changing identities. Exploring what it meant to be a gay man in 2002 and dealing with society's expectations of sexuality was challenging. This involved living with roommates whose religion prohibited them from interacting with gay people like myself. My sexuality was not the only identity I was coming to terms with. Being a first-generation Latino at a predominantly White campus, I endured many challenges students like myself experienced in college (i.e., imposter syndrome, homesickness, academic challenges). I found comfort and community in all my Chicano/a studies courses. Reading books by Anzaldua and attending courses taught by Professor Gaspar de Alba, professor of Chicana/o art, culture, and sexuality, led to my identity awakening. It was during my undergraduate career learning in these courses I found passion in learning the ways my intersecting identities did not need to battle one another but rather

celebrated. As a scholar and artist, I continually found comfort and strength by writing and creating art pieces that featured all my identities: gay, Latino, Mexican, Chicano, immigrant, first-generation, sibling, son, feminine, and many others. It was during my undergraduate experiences I found the importance of not choosing the many aspects of my identity but to walk through life empowered by all intersecting identities continually playing a role in who I am.

How I carried my intersecting identities after college have made an impact on all my professional experiences. Fifteen plus year ago, collaborating with high school students as an academic counselor for Upward Bound, a federally funded college access program, was a pivotal career for me where I found my niche in working in the educational field. In providing mentorship to high school students, I continually shared my undergraduate experiences and how all my identities played a role in finding who I am as an educator. High school students applying to college were learning about my experiences and taking those stories with them as they began their journeys to college. Many students contacted me once they were in college and after their graduations to express gratitude about how in knowing my stories, they also faced challenges of identity but empowered themselves by embracing their own intersecting identities.

For me to continue to live my life authentically, I have continued to embrace all my intersecting identities. Collaborating with marginalized high school and college students has and continues to be my passion. In the field of student affairs, I find myself surrounded by like-minded folks whose passion is also to support our college students. The older I get and seek higher level positions at institutions of higher education, parts of my intersecting identities are called into question. Recently, I applied for a senior level position at a well-known private institution. From the research I conducted on the campus, it was clear the senior leadership for the most part identified as White. During the interview process, it was not apparent diversity in

their staff was that important. I was hoping to meet folks of color or members of the LGBTQ+ community. Unfortunately, the lack of diversity witnessed during the interview process not only deterred me from wanting to move forward but it also discouraged me as I felt like an imposter applying for a job, I did not feel confident in taking on. I felt powerless and it reminded me of when I was an undergraduate maneuvering an unfamiliar territory as a minority with multiple marginalized identities. Thinking about seeking new career opportunities and the challenges I faced made me think about the experiences other folks of marginalized identities faced in these same situations. If GLBA have moved up in their career, how did they maneuver these challenges? What strategies did they implement to battle the identity fatigue I have been facing as I attempt to move up in the professional world?

Statement of Problem

I have found in my own experience as a first-generation, gay, Latino administrator the more I work in higher education, the more I learn about barriers gay men of color continue to face as we attempt to grow and advance professionally. Racial fatigue, microaggressions, homophobia, and lack of professional mobility opportunities have prevented me from advancing in my profession. As a gay Latino administrator, both my sexuality and race have played a role in how I maneuver spaces normally taken by White and heterosexual colleagues. The microaggressions and impostor syndrome I have encountered during my tenure as a professional working in higher education has impacted my experience in moving up professionally.

In my time working in higher education, I have noticed the absence of GLBA and the lack of equitable representation in senior leadership positions, which I feel directly impacts the professional mobility of LGBTQ+ staff working at universities. Although rare, I have encountered GLBA who have been able to maneuver and navigate racially hostile institutions, to

what Yosso (2005) referred to as navigational capital, to reach senior leadership positions by challenging the status quo. Understanding the ways GLBA have surpassed professional and personal challenges to reach high level positions helps to understand this under researched population.

Purpose of the Study

In thinking about the role of diversity and equity in addressing the anti-racist rhetoric at college campuses that impact gay Latino and gay Black administrators, we need to consider how inadequate access to education continues to maneuver hegemonic and oppressive structures embedded in the institution of higher education. Considering institutions of higher education have a goal to foster an equitable education for young adults and be able to participate in a democratic and diverse society (Gurin et al., 2002), universities must ensure diversity is inclusive of not just race and ethnicity but also sexuality.

As colleges and universities continue to grow, both in size and the diversity of students, it is important to consider how university administrators also need to meet the demands of diversifying their senior leadership team. Blumenfeld et al. (2016) contended, “as colleges and universities continue to more accurately reflect the diverse makeup of society, institutions have focused on the importance of creating campus environments that include, welcome, and support people of diverse backgrounds and social identities” (p. 1). Additionally, Gasman et al. (2015) also argued, “college and universities will have to become serious about diversifying across the board including senior leadership to meet the needs of their current and future student body” (p. 5). Senior leaders are now tasked to consider what diversity looks like at the senior level at institutions of higher education (i.e., chancellors, presidents, vice chancellors, deans, provosts). As a leader in higher education, “understanding the dynamics of [our] own social identities help

people to better appreciate the views of others . . . this appreciation is essential if leaders are to effectively bridge differences” (Ruderman & Ernst, 2004, p. 4). Leaders across the nation are now being tasked to “think about [how] race and racism affects student achievement” (Gooden & Dantley, 2012, p. 249) as racism is a societal problem no longer invisible, which I argue also includes sexual identity.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to shed light on the lived experiences of GLBA and attempt to understand if and how universities are supportive to the professional experiences this population encounters in their day to day lives. Educators and university leaders need to hear the stories from GLBA to better understand the impact culture senior leadership can have on this vulnerable population. As a result of this study, educators and university leaders can learn from these experiences and put into place equitable practices that can support the recruitment and retention of GLBA if they genuinely want to work toward diversity at their institution. Additionally, the findings could help educators identify their bias in collaborating with marginalized communities with intersecting identities.

Research Questions

My research question was: How have professional development and mentorship experiences influenced the navigational capital and career advancement of gay Latino and gay Black administrators (GLBA) leading colleges or universities? I hoped to learn more about the experiences and politics GLBA faced when they progressed in their professional careers to help my reader understand what strategies have helped in advancing GLBA to senior leadership positions predominantly held by White, heterosexual leaders.

To answer the research question that I attempted to uncover throughout my study, the research was guided by three subquestions:

1. What perceived challenges (internal or external) do GLBA believe they are facing when they are applying for or accepting a position?
2. Once a GLBA has attained a leadership position, what are the ongoing challenges and strategies he/they implement to confront homophobia and heterosexism?
3. What personal qualities and characteristics limit or create the opportunity for GLBA to become leaders?

It was important to me for my study to focus on male administrators of color who self-identify as gay Latino or gay Black because I wanted to uncover how sexuality and race/ethnicity have both played a role in the professional experiences of GLBA. My goal was to recruit at least four male participants. The benefit of the research includes sharing the experiences of participants to better understand how institutions of higher education can provide better mechanisms to support GLBA in their professional development to have equitable representation in senior leadership positions. By sharing real life narratives, I seek to demonstrate the need for additional support for this vulnerable population.

Definitions of Terms

The following terms were used throughout this study. The terms are explained in detail in this section for the purposes of clarity and exactitude:

Administrator is the term to describe senior level professional position at an institution of higher education that oversees multiple departments/division/area (i.e., associate vice chancellor, assistant vice president, dean, director, associate dean; Simplicio, 2006).

Heteronormativity is the belief heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation (Jones, 2006).

Queer is understood as an umbrella term to include a range of sexual identities not considered straight (Somerville, 2014).

Latinx is used in the context of higher education to disrupt the traditional binary notions of gender (Salinas, 2020).

Limitations

Methodological Limitation

For this qualitative study, interviews with four participants provided rich data that supported the research questions. All interviews were recorded and conducted via the Zoom platform both during and after work hours. Some limitations to note about interviews are they “provide indirect information filtered through the views of interviewees” and “not all people are equally articulate and perceptive” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 188). Having the recordings allowed easy access to rewatching each interview for clarity and context, and participants kept their camera on for the duration of the interview, providing additional visual data to analyze.

Although helpful for this research, narrative research can be a challenging approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). During interviews, observations were also made and recorded on a research journal. The limitation to observations included coming off as intrusive to the participant and confidential information shared that I cannot report (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Additionally, to attempt to create rapport, information about the personal nature of this research study was shared with research participants. This involved establishing comfort and a trusting environment, so participants felt at ease in sharing their personal stories, which made it challenging during the initial interviews. Ensuring biases were noted was also key but created limitations as well.

Delimitation

Delimitations are controlled characteristics that limit the scope and ensure boundaries of the study (Simon, 2011). This study had one delimitation. Participants were self-identified gay Latino or Black administrators and recruited through an informational flier that included the scope of the study. Participants self-selected to participate because they already understood the nature of the problem and potential for these narratives to be shared broadly. Although recruitment was done broadly through social media, limited interest made it challenging to recruit participants. However, this delimitation narrowed the participant group to those who have experienced challenges in their professional field and decided to share their stories. All interviews were conducted with participants who have very public and important roles, some of the participants' responses were guarded, and to some degree, felt censored due to the nature of their stories, which can also be noted as a limitation. Moser and Korstjens (2018) argued sampling size depends on the information richness of the data; due to the nature of participant's narratives, the collected data shined a light to this under researched phenomenon. However, the participant narratives do not claim to represent generalizations of these populations.

In terms of participants, the study was delimited to self-identified GLBA working in senior leadership positions leading institutions as openly gay men. Their experiences touched upon their coming out process both for themselves and when they shared their sexuality with colleagues while also touching upon their narratives when pursuing other positions in higher education. The data shared in this study were delimited to the responses of interviewees compiled from three sessions of interviews and the body of research collected in this study.

Organization of Dissertation

The organization of this dissertation is in five chapters. Chapter 1 provided background and context of the study. Additionally, included were the statement of the problem, definitions of terms, limitation, and delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the current literature on LGBTQ+ administrators in higher education and provides the four themes found in the literature and concludes with recommendations and next steps. The methodology, research design, theoretical framework, role and lens of researcher, and data analysis procedures all make up Chapter 3. Chapter 4 includes findings from the participants' interviews that have been coded through specific narratives using *testimonio* and intersectionality as frameworks. Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation with a summary of findings, suggestions for further research, recommendations, and concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Thinking about the diversity of senior leadership teams on college campuses, one must consider the role and experiences of gay Latino and gay Black administrators (GLBA) working in higher education institutions. Higher education research on diversity is primarily focused on racial inequities (Allen, 2005) but rarely is inclusive of the intersection with sexuality. It is imperative experiences of LGBTQ+ administrators be considered when discussing diversity plans at college campuses as their stories and participation needs to be valued as much as other minority populations (Croteau & Lark, 1995; Rankin, 2005; Renn, 2010). Only by better understanding their experiences will campuses be able to accurately put systems in place to ensure the well-being and success of LGBTQ+ administrators. To better understand the experiences of higher education administrators who identify as LGBTQ+, a review of current literature is presented. Although “LGBTQ+ literature in higher education witnessed considerable growth in recent decades” (Pryor & Hoffman, 2020, p. 2), most of the scholarship focuses on experiences of LGBTQ+ students and rarely focused on LGBTQ+ faculty, staff, and executive leaders (Renn, 2010). However, the scant literature that does exist on experiences of LGBTQ+ higher education administrators is compelling and the following research themes emerged: (a) identity development and consequences of being “out,” (b) campus climate, (c) challenge and role of heteronormativity, (d) the importance of intersectionality, and (e) the need to continue to identify the various barriers to success minority administrators continue to face as they maneuver higher education.

Identity Development and Consequences of Being Out

For university administrators, leading institutions of higher education gaining awareness of their social identities and the implications from gaining this knowledge is an important facet of their leadership (Ruderman & Ernst, 2004). Scholars have further argued for university leaders “understanding the dynamics of their own social identities helps leaders better appreciate the views of others . . . this appreciation is essential if leaders are to effectively bridge differences” (Ruderman & Ernst, 2004, p. 4). For LGBTQ+ administrators, their identity development can be described to what Bilodeau and Renn (2005) argued as the stages of the “coming-out process” (p. 28), which D’Augelli (1994) further described as six “identity processes:’ 1. exiting heterosexuality, 2. developing a personal LGB identity, 3. developing an LGB social identity, 4. becoming an LGB offspring, 5. developing an LGB intimacy status, and 6. entering the LGB community” (Bilodeau & Renn, 2005, p. 28). One can argue, for LGBTQ+ administrators, choosing when to “come out” at work should be part of D’Augelli’s identity process. Bilodeau and Renn (2005) further contended an individual may experience an identity process at different points in their life; for example, when a LGBTQ+ person decides to come out at work.

Other studies demonstrate the importance of what it means to be out at work for LGBTQ+ administrators. Evans and Broido (1999) found there may be varied factors that influence the coming out process, stating “a desire to be closer to others, to validate one’s own self-worth, and to stop having to hide” (p. 658). This process of “coming out” is imperative for LGBTQ+ administrators as they must negotiate when they come out at their institution, which may impact their experiences at work. Croteau and Lark (2009) presented a study that looked at the experiences of student affairs professionals as it relates to their sexual orientation. Their

purpose, they argued, would shed more light on why “lesbian, gay, bisexual professionals who were more open about their sexual orientation reported more discrimination in job searches” (p. 189). What Croteau and Lark (2009) found in their survey results demonstrated how “homophobic discrimination appears to be a frequent occurrence in the work lives of lesbian, gay, and bisexual professionals” (p. 195). However, in their survey, they found some participants more open about their sexuality reported feeling fulfilled or satisfied, which they contended “the positive effect of openness on job satisfaction may counterbalance the negative effect of discrimination” (p. 195). Croteau and Lark (2009) concluded their study by speculating LGBTQ+ staff who choose to be open about their sexuality may relate those positive feelings to “freedom from the burden of keeping a secret; the rewards of serving as role models for lesbian, gay, and bisexual students” (p. 197). This duality of when to be out as a professional staff member affects their identity development, which can also present some challenges.

For LGBTQ+ administrators, considering when to bring up their sexuality may create challenges. Dolan (1998) posited “there is an insidious assumption that bringing sexual identity in the classroom—even as part of a rigorous academic curriculum—means advocating (proselytizing, even) for unconventional sexual behavior” (p. 44). Considering this argument, LGBTQ+ administrators or faculty teaching in a classroom must consider the implications and assumptions that may arise concerning their sexuality and what it means for the people around them. In a sense, “visibility comes with a cost; it makes gay, lesbian, and queer faculty members instantly vulnerable to sanctions by the state, alumni, and trustees” (Dolan, 1998, p. 45).

Ultimately, attempting to maneuver when an LGBTQ+ administrator decides to come out to colleagues may impact their identity (D’Augelli & Patterson, 1995), and as a result, may impact their leadership development abilities. Evans and Broido (1999) argued “institutions of

higher education, unfortunately, too often reflect homophobic and heterosexist nature of society rather than taking an active part in educating students [and staff], confronting harassment and discrimination” (p. 666). The literature presented here demonstrates the current research has been limited in providing more data on the ways identity development for LGBTQ+ administrators may be fragmented. The reality is LGBTQ+ administrators experience the “negative impact of homophobic and heterosexist environments” (Evans & Broido, 1999, p. 666) and the current literature neglects to address these concerns.

Furthermore, a study that touches on the experiences of staff in negotiating when to come out is the 2018 study done by Kortegast and van der Toorn. In their study, they sought to examine how lesbian and gay student affairs professionals decide to be open about their sexual identity in their institution. The researchers surveyed 19 professional staff members from small colleges and universities after recruiting them across various national conferences, committees, and listservs. Through their interviews, they found individuals had to actively negotiate when to come out to employers and colleagues. Some alluded being out at work was a crucial factor in deciding to remain at the institution. Disclosing their sexual identity was evaluated for risk as disclosing “of sexuality was linked to the campus environment, potential consequences, and the desire to be comfortable in the workplace” (Kortegast & van der Toorn, 2018, p. 272). One unique observation made by Kortegast and van der Toorn was in their research analysis. They contended in negotiating when to come out in the workplace, participants’ ability to be out “serve two purposes: (a) it sends a message that it is acceptable to be out, but not ‘in your face’ out and (b) it serves to reinforce heteronormativity” (p. 275). In observation, (a) the authors claimed participants shared a level of “outness” to not make others feel too uncomfortable, and (b) the idea of coming out alludes to conforming to heterosexuality, a need to out oneself to

heterosexual people. This second point is further discussed in a later section in this paper. This study, like the ones shared before, provided an overview of experiences LGBTQ+ staff members go through in navigating when to come out, its effects on their overall identity development, and what that means for their overall experience on college campuses. These and other experiences shape the campus climate, which is further discussed in the following section.

Campus Climate

Another area in the literature that touches on the experiences of LGBTQ+ administrators is the role and effects of campus climate. Rankin (2005) defined campus climate as “the cumulative attitudes, behaviors, and standards of employees and students concerning access for, inclusion of, and level of respect for individual and group needs, abilities, and potential” (p. 17). For campuses across the nation, surveys on campus climate can serve as opportunities to identify concerns that impact students, staff, and faculty. More recently, this “term is used on many campuses and in many contexts to understand diversity issues and quality of life issues” (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008, p. 222). Harper and Hurtado (2007, as cited in Hart & Fellabaum, 2008) “stress[ed] that the purpose of conducting and reporting campus climate research should be to serve as a foundation for institutional change” (p. 222). To accurately capture campus climate, researchers call on including experiences by faculty, staff, administrators, and students who truly shape the climate (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). More specifically, Hart and Fellabaum call for representation of various identities, including underrepresented and protected populations as variables in future campus climate surveys.

One of those underrepresented populations needed to be included in campus climate surveys are LGBTQ+ populations. What researchers know from some of the current research is LGBTQ+ administrators have been one of many groups who have reported discrimination on

campuses. Specifically, Croteau and Lark (1995) looked at the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) student affairs professionals about their work experiences. In their study, they surveyed student affairs professionals part of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) Standing Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Awareness. Out of 408 professionals, 270 responded to the survey. Their survey found “homophobic discrimination appears to be a frequent occurrence in the work lives of lesbian, gay, and bisexual professionals” (Croteau & Lark, 1995, p. 195). Additionally, one of their recommendations for student affairs leaders “wishing to recruit and retain lesbian, gay, bisexual student affairs professionals may need to work toward increasing support, as well as eliminating discrimination, in job environments” (Croteau & Lark, 1995, p. 196). One thing to note in this study is that the research was conducted in 1995, which is important to note to situate the timeframe of their participants’ experiences.

Ten years after Croteau and Lark’s (1995) study, Rankin (2005) examined the experiences of LGBT people at the national level specifically to look at their opinions on campus climate, and their responses to institutional support for LGBT concerns. In their study, they chose to recruit 14 campuses with a respondent sample of 1,669 self-identified LGBT people. Their data demonstrated 73% of faculty, 74% of students, 81% of administrators, and 73% of staff described their campus climate as homophobic. A unique observation of their study was of the campuses that reported initiative-taking initiatives to address the needs and risks LGBT face on campuses, respondents reported “fear for their safety, keep their identities secret, experience harassment, and feel that their universities are unsupportive of LGBT people” (p. 20). However dire, Rankin offers some suggestions for campuses to implement to address challenges affecting LGBT people on campuses. Essentially campuses and campus leadership must have a “shift of basic assumptions, premises, and beliefs must take place in all areas of the institution; only then

can behavior and structures be changed . . . Transformative change demands committed leadership in articulating both institutional goals and policies” (p. 21). Ten years after Croteau and Lark’s (1995) study, Rankin’s (2005) research demonstrated the campus climate for LGBT people are similar, and more work needs to be done.

Another notable study addressing the experiences of LGBTQ+ affairs professionals was conducted by Pryor and Hoffman (2020). Their study sought to show how LGBTQ+ affairs staff resist bureaucratic systems and how administrators who supervise them can support them. Through their research, they found 35 LGBTQ+ practitioners across the United States who have worked in a college or university LGBTQ+ affairs office or program. It is important to emphasize this study sought to learn about the experiences of LGBTQ+ staff who work directly in LGBTQ+ spaces and/or programs on campus; it is assumed results of this study do not properly embody the experiences of LGBTQ+ staff working in other areas on campus. However, Pryor and Hoffman (2020) found participants expressed concerns about being pigeonholed into their role, claiming the campus relied on their sole role to “address gender and sexuality-related issues” (p. 8). Additionally, many participants expressed a need for institutional support and administrators who had awareness of LGBTQ+ identities. Also important is the concern campuses rely on a single individual to support and mentor LGBTQ+ students and may neglect multiple identities of LGBTQ+ students. For example, having a White cisgender gay center coordinator may miss the opportunity to mentor a Black lesbian female identified student.

Another significant impact this study provided is the notion campus leadership is left to provide oversight and guidance to LGBTQ+ affairs staff when they may not know enough about this population or their experiences (Pryor & Hoffman, 2020). For LGBTQ+ identified staff, this study showed their “reflections on attitudes, values, and cultural competencies among their

institutional leadership reflect leadership's minimal buy-in to LGBTQ+ communities" (Pryor & Hoffman, 2020, p. 10). According to this study, the role of leadership in addressing the campus climate for LGBTQ+ affairs staff is essential; specifically, if leadership expects minimum knowledge and preparation for these staff, that also signifies this expectation of knowledge should also apply to leadership overseeing those areas (Pryor & Hoffman, 2020). It is important for leadership, especially for those who identify as heterosexual, to identify how their role may impact the campus climate for marginalized communities. The first step in identifying how their role affects other members of the campus community is to identify ways heteronormativity is embedded in campus culture.

Challenge and Role of Heteronormativity

In reviewing the literature on the experiences of LGBTQ+ administrators, there were several studies that mentioned or discussed the role of heteronormativity. Considering the data already shared on what LGBTQ+ populations at college campuses share in campus climate surveys, it is not surprising authors made observations on the role heteronormativity plays in their everyday experiences. One observation made by Iverson (2007, as cited in Preston & Hoffman, 2015) indicated "scholars have outlined how traditional White institutions, despite programs and policies aimed at addressing diversity, continue to operate in a system that has historical and contextual connections to traditional hierarchies of racialized oppression" (p. 65). The system Iverson points out is one that embodies systems of higher education where oppressive structures create barriers for marginalized and underrepresented communities. Preston and Hoffman (2015) further articulated as educators and researchers, we all need to consider how the system of higher education formulates the gendered and sexual hierarchies that perpetuate

this oppression for sexual minorities like LGBTQ+ administrators. They further coin higher education as:

Heterogendered institutions, that is they operate in a way that continues to sustain and reaffirm traditional hierarchies of gendered and sexual oppression, regardless of the various policies, regulations, and diversity programs in place to support LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff. (Preston & Hoffman, 2015, p. 65)

In their study, they further analyzed the experiences of LGBTQ students attending traditional White institutions to demonstrate the ways institutions of higher education perpetuate hegemonic notions of racial privilege and power. Although a strong study, researchers only focused on experiences of students and did not include data on staff and faculty who identify in the LGBTQ+ community.

Like Preston and Hoffman (2015), Blumenfeld et al. (2005) focused in better understanding the experiences of LGBTQ+ students as they argue “in the midst of these progressive advancements, however, conditions related to campus climate often remain difficult at best for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) students” (p. 1). In their study, they conducted a comprehensive study across the nation using the *2010 State of Higher Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender People Study*. What they found was “LGBTQ students, staff, and faculty, and administrators remain at significantly higher risk for harassment at our colleges and universities, compared with their heterosexual and gender normative counterparts” (p. 5). Through their extensive qualitative analysis, they were able to collect rich data structured in various themes related to the campus climate at their institutions. Some of the themes that emerged in their study included campus safety, institutional inaction, intersecting campus oppressions, religion, unequal benefits, negative comments, and others.

Results from their study indicated responses of campus climate with overarching heteronormativity or heterosexism. The responses of oppression included “exclusion of the needs, concerns, cultures, and life experiences of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, asexuals, intersex people, and people who live along the trans spectrum” (p. 16). The authors further argued in their participants’ fight against heteronormativity and cissexism, “minoritized sexual and gender identities are forced to struggle constantly against their own invisibility and make it difficult for them to integrate a positive sexual and gender identity” (p. 16). It is imperative to consider how the fight against heterosexism on college campuses may indicate to LGBTQ+ populations they are unsafe and unwelcome in a college campus, which may jeopardize the entire campus climate, affecting the campus. Educators in institutions of higher education need to recognize the ways they participate in silencing those who are powerless. Rankin (2005) indicated “differences disturb the norm; a culture of silence reinforces the norm for those who are different [like LGBT people on college campuses]” (p. 21). Naming the heteronormativity that exists on campus structure, which perpetuates a negative campus climate for underrepresented people, is one step in the direction of fully understanding the experiences of LGBTQ+ administrators.

Importance of Intersectionality

The identity development of LGBTQ+ people described previously was focused primarily on their sexual identity. Numerous studies presented so far touch on sexual minorities; some on the campus as whole and others solely on the experiences of students. One theme that continued to come up in most studies was the lack of intersectionality of identities. Theorist and researcher Crenshaw (1991) is well known for conducting research in identity politics. In one of her early studies on the context of violence against women, she contended:

The difference in identity politics is problematic, fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class . . . ignoring difference within groups contributes to tension among groups, another problem of identity politics that bears on efforts to politicize violence against women. (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1242)

Crenshaw (1990) considered intersectionality to map the intersections of race and gender by arguing race and gender account for the many ways identity is constructed considering the way our social world is developed. Using Crenshaw's ideology of intersectionality in understanding the complexities of all aspects of one's identity, researchers looking at the experiences of LGBTQ+ people have recommended the need to further investigate the ways intersectionality can further provide depth to their research.

Renn (2010) provided an overview of existing literature addressing LGBT issues in higher education. Through their research, they found literature focused on visibility, campus climate, and identity studies related to LGBT concerns in higher education, and the themes that emerged from the literature were usage of queer theory, delivery of research methods, improving educational practice, and intersections with other critical issues in education. In their recommendations for future research, one of the areas of further growth is the "intersections of LGBT identities with race, gender, class, and religious and cultural identities in higher education" (Renn, 2010, p. 138). They arguably feel in considering this, educators will be able to critically improve the field by considering all aspects of one's identity politics.

As mentioned previously, the study by Hart and Fellabaum (2008) on analyzing campus climate results in a call for representation of various identities, including underrepresented and protected populations as variables in future campus climate surveys. One of their eight

recommendations from their study is solely focused on “how intersecting and interlocking identities contribute to how individuals socially construct their environment” (p. 231). They argued future studies really need to consider being inclusive of multiple identities which may further influence the experiences on campus. Including various identities in research studies and identifying how all identities interlocked can produce rich data to further inform support structures of LGBTQ+ people, specifically administrators at higher education institutions who are underresearched (Renn, 2010). This point is further supported by the study results of Pryor and Hoffman (2020), who in their consideration for research, aim to call for “exploring the unique challenges of, trans and genderqueer leaders, as well as leaders of Color, [which was beyond] the scope of [their] study but warrants further interrogation” (p. 14). The unique challenges faced by trans and leaders of color Pryor and Hoffman allude to can provide better context to the unique experiences of a diverse LGBTQ+ administrator population.

Furthermore, the study by Vaccaro (2012) provided data on the campus climate for LGBT staff, students, faculty, and the need for better policies that support this population. Inadvertently, their study lacked diversity and intersectionality as their “many participants were White, intersectionality issues of race and sexual orientation went largely unaddressed” (Vaccaro, 2012, p. 439), resulting in a need for further research. Comparably, Gardner et al. (2014) featured their attempt at uncovering more about the experiences of African American administrators at primarily White institutions, but neglected to include the intersection of sexuality, limiting their research to a heteronormative discourse. It is clear from these studies researchers must take intersectionality of identities into account when researching minority populations.

One notable study conducted by Mitchell and Means (2014) sought to conduct a literature review on understanding the experiences of gay and bisexual college men at predominantly White institutions. Although focused on the experiences of college students, they argued:

many theories and models of sexual orientation identity development fail to consider how intersections of social identities (e.g., Black, male, gay, and bisexual) can and does influence the ways in which one identifies with their peers, friends, and family members.

(Mitchell & Means, 2014, p. 23)

Again, although this study was focused on the experiences of college students, these and what other studies have demonstrated, is the need to consider how the intersecting identities of LGBTQ+ people can significantly shed some light on how their experiences have been challenged at institutions of higher education.

Intersectionality of Sexuality, Race, and Gender

In the review of literature surrounding the experiences of LGBTQ+ administrators, the studies found information and pivot points where future research may lead to really understanding this population. It is important to understand the need for the intersection of identities when considering the experiences of marginalized communities. Doing a more specific literature review on the intersectionality of sexuality, race, and gender resulted in compelling studies that attempt to uncover how looking at multiple aspects of a participant's identity can really provide rich and telling narratives. For example, Misawa (2010) sought to look at the intersection of racist and homophobic bullying by interviewing gay, male, students of color. Furthermore, Duran and Pérez (2017) interviewed queer, Latino men to identify how they navigate disclosing their sexual orientation to family and how familiar capital contributes to their navigation of higher education. Lastly, Means et al. (2017) featured reflections from Black, gay

men currently in their doctoral programs to identify challenges and success experienced during their doctoral journey. All three studies demonstrate the richness of how bringing together intersecting identities can truly uncover experiences of marginalized communities. What all three, and many others, have in common is their focus on experiences related to college students, but very few studies in the current literature feature experiences focused on staff and administrators at institutions of higher education.

Conclusion, Final Recommendations, and Next Steps

The overview of the literature presented through this chapter provided a fragment of the much-needed research to expand our knowledge of LGBTQ+ administrators. Renn (2010) argued through their literature review of LGBT concerns in higher education, studies of student gender and sexuality have been collected widely, but “studies of the experiences of LGBT faculty, staff, and executive leaders have been nearly absent” (p. 136). To truly meet the need of diversity requirements aimed to provide college students opportunities to participate in a diverse and democratic society, institutions of higher education need to put practices and policies in place to remove systematic barriers affecting marginalized communities. Kortegast and van der Toorn (2018) warned educators in considering the intersecting identities of faculty and administrators of color need to consider the “cultural taxation . . . imposed in which individuals assume additional responsibilities and have additional burdens placed on them because of their identity” (p. 276). To avoid this concern, leaders of higher education institutions must find ways to ensure marginalized administrators do not feel invisible or taken for granted. What the current literature demonstrates is more research is needed on staff and administrators who have multiple marginalized identities to ensure we are meeting the needs of our ever-changing and diverse institutions.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study was to shed light to the lived experiences of gay Latino and gay Black administrators (GLBA) and attempt to understand if and how universities are supportive to the professional experiences this population encounters in their day to day lives. This chapter focuses on describing the design and specific procedures used in capturing narratives of each participant as they describe how their intersecting identities influenced their professional trajectory.

My research question was: How have professional development and mentorship experiences influenced the navigational capital and career advancement of gay Latino and gay Black administrators (GLBA) leading colleges or universities? I hoped to learn more about the experiences and politics GLBA faced when they progressed in their professional careers to help my reader understand what strategies have helped in advancing GLBA to senior leadership positions predominantly held by White heterosexual leaders.

To answer the research question that I attempted to uncover throughout my study, the research was guided by three subquestions:

1. What perceived challenges (internal or external) do GLBA believe they are facing when they are applying for or accepting a position?
2. Once a GLBA has attained a leadership position, what are the ongoing challenges and strategies he/they implement to confront homophobia and heterosexism?
3. What personal qualities and characteristics limit or create the opportunity for GLBA to become leaders?

Taking into consideration the intended research question and sub-questions, I selected qualitative inquiry as the methodology of the present research. Creswell and Creswell (2018) argued qualitative research allows researchers to collect data where participants experience the issue under the study. By interviewing participants and noting observations in behavior and demeanor during interviews, qualitative research is appropriate to use when attempting to collect and analyze themes for insight into the experiences of gay Latino and gay Black administrators. Through a qualitative approach, this research study intended to understand meaning making, interpretations, and be inductive by exploring participants' stories and center their voices. In this chapter, I explain my research methodology and outline the process by which I sought to answer the research questions presented previously. Included in this methodology chapter are the following sections: (a) research design, (b) theoretical framework, (c) role and lens of researcher, (d) protection of human subjects, (e) participant recruitment, (f) data collection techniques, and (g) data analysis procedures.

Research Design

Research for this study was intended to uncover themes from experiences of GLBA working at institutions of higher education. It was the goal of this research to interview participants with the intent to uncover when and how they made sense of all their intersecting identities in relation to their professional trajectory. With these realities in mind, the research was qualitative in nature. Three one-on-one interviews were conducted for each participant using Seidman's (2006) phenomenological interview protocol, which "involves conducting a series of three separate interviews with each participant" (p. 16). Through this interview approach, Seidman (2006) argued it allowed "the interviewer and participant to plumb the experience and to place it in context" (p. 17). The first interview established context for the participants' life

history. The research sought details about their life growing up (i.e., family, education, childhood), why they chose to work in the education field, and their journey coming out to themselves and others. The second interview allowed for the participant to provide details of their experience in the context of their lived experience as it relates to the research study. During this second interview, the study hoped to uncover more about participants' professional development journey, mentorship opportunities, career advancement, and experience working in higher education. During the third interview, participants reflected on the meaning of their experience. In this last interview, Seidman (2006) argued participants "look at how the factors in their lives interacted to bring them to their present situation" (p. 18); specifically, how has their sexuality, race or ethnicity and experience impacted their leadership, what challenges they have gone through, and what opportunities and hopes they have for their future and the future of other gay leaders of color.

Theoretical Frameworks

By redeeming your most painful experiences, you transform them into something valuable, algo para compartir or share with others so they too may be empowered.

–Gloria Anzaldúa, *now let us shift*

Testimonios

To accurately capture the experiences of GLBA at higher education institutions, it is important to situate their reality as lived, pedagogical experiences. One way to accomplish this was by using a *testimonio* framework. The *testimonio* framework has roots in oral cultures and in Latin American experiences and struggles (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). Specifically, Delgado Bernal et al. (2012) argued:

Within the field of education, scholars are increasingly taking up testimonio as a pedagogical, methodological, and activist approach to social justice that transgresses

traditional paradigms in academia . . . [by] challenging objectivity by situating the individual in communion with a collective experience marked by marginalization, oppression, or resistance. (p. 363)

The purpose in using testimonio as a theoretical approach resulted in much needed understanding on how GLBA have built solidarity and resiliency through their professional experiences, and in some ways, resisted the dominant culture. Three of the four research participants currently hold leadership positions at their institution, which demonstrates they have maneuvered oppressive structures to get to where they are. By interviewing them and capturing their experiences, this research study uncovered their stories and narratives to bring “change through consciousness-raising” (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012, p. 364). As Delgado Bernal et al. (2012) contended, testimonio “involves the participant in a critical reflection of their personal experience within particular sociopolitical realities . . . [and] engages the personal and collective aspects of identity formation while translating choices, silences, and ultimately identities” (p. 364). In using testimonio as a guiding theoretical framework for this research, the hope was to engage readers with the research participants’ experiences and spark social change. Green (2021) argued:

Testimonio offers scholars the privilege to look through the window into the lived realities of others and to do something with that information . . . the stories, conveyed through their participants’ memories, struggles and heartaches offer important lessons to the researcher and subsequently, the audience. (p. 120)

The current research has demonstrated GLBA have not been included in diversity work and can be argued their experiences have been silenced from higher education research.

Although the testimonio framework has roots in bringing Chicana/Latina scholarship to light

(Delgado Bernal et al., 2012), I used this framework to give voices to GLBA and identify ways their intersecting identities shape their experiences.

Intersectionality Theory

In the review of literature surrounding the experiences of LGBTQ+ administrators, the studies found information and pivot points where future research may lead to really understanding this population. What was learned from the fourth theme presented in the literature review section was the need for the intersection of identities when considering the experiences of marginalized communities. Using Crenshaw's (1990) intersectionality as a theoretical framework for this study captured the ways in which race, sexuality, and gender play a role in the identity development and experiences of GLBA at higher education institutions. Specifically, by observing the relation of all intersecting identities, this study provided data in an underresearched area.

Hill Collins and Bilge (2016) contextualized intersectionality as the ways Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color (BIWOC) have managed their own "empowerment within and across different racial/ethnic communities and in different national contexts demonstrates varying patterns of how race, class, gender, and sexuality are negotiated in the context of social movement politics" (p. 80). Hill Collins and Bilge (2016) further exemplified this by sharing the work of Anzaldúa (1999) in her classic volume *Borderlands/La Frontera* where she wrote about claiming the borderland space where she embraced the multiple identities that claim who she is. Keating (2009) shared an excerpt where Anzaldúa describes what it is like to live in this intersectionality:

"Your allegiance is to La Raza, the Chicano movement," say the members of my race.

"Your allegiance is to the Third World," say my Black and Asian friends. "Your

allegiance is to your gender, to women,” say the feminists. Then there’s my allegiance to the Gay movement, to the socialist revolution, to the New Age, to magic and the occult.

(p. 2)

Intersectionality allowed an in-depth look at the ways intersecting identities have shaped the ways GLBA embrace living in their own borderland. By using these theoretical frameworks, I situated participants’ experiences and identified ways they have challenged heteronormativity, homophobia, microaggressions, and racism and the impact all their identities intersect as they pursue mentorship and professional growth in their field.

Role and Lens of Researcher

As a researcher, I identify as a first-generation gay Latino man, born in Jalisco, Mexico, and immigrated to the United States when I was 2 years old. I grew up in Southeast Los Angeles and grew up as a low income and first-generation student. As the first in my family to go to college and experience life attempting to reach my parents’ *American Dream*, I encountered challenges in school and career that impacted all my intersecting identities. I have been with my husband for 15 years and have a 3-year-old son. Although my family is accepting of my gay identity, it took some time for them to adjust as I was also the first in my family to come out of the closet and live openly as a gay man. In some ways, I shattered cultural and racial norms when coming out because I demonstrated my gay identity was not going to hold me back from pursuing my growth and development as a leader and educator. I am the only member of my extended family who has completed a master’s degree and pursuing a doctoral degree.

As I have shared previously, being a first-generation college student, I have experienced microaggressions and feelings of impostor syndrome when attempting to grow in my profession. Although my own insecurities may have impacted my career trajectory, I hypothesize other gay

men of color (i.e., specifically Latino and Black) have encountered barriers in their profession that can be attributed to their intersecting identities.

As a gay man working in a predominantly heteronormative and White field, I often felt insecure and shied away from opportunities for lack of confidence and continued imposter syndrome. As a researcher, I acknowledge my positionality, and in conducting research for this study, I needed to reflect on my positionality and to be transparent on how my experience influenced my analysis. My own experiences inherently shaped the lens I used during the interview process. During the study, I kept a research journal and was intentionally reflective of my positionality and how it shaped my interpretation.

Reflexivity and Validity

One thing I considered during my study is my own reflexivity and positionality. Creswell and Creswell (2018) contended “qualitative research is interpretive research the inquirer is typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants” (p. 183); specifically, because I share similar identities and roles at our respective institutions. Creswell and Creswell (2018) further argued “sufficient reflexivity occurs when researchers record notes during the process of research, reflect on their own subjective experiences, and consider how their firsthand experiences may shape their interpretation of results” (p. 184). In this section, I chose to include details of my own experiences to ensure my interpretations and observations have context and data were validated. Green (2021) argued, “narrative techniques such as memoing and reflective journals can diminish the risk of ideological interference, but not eliminate it” (p. 116). In keeping a researcher journal through this process, I have been able to write down thoughts, impressions, observations, and follow up questions as I conducted my

interviews. In the following chapter, I describe how I revisited this journal as I transcribed and coded my data to aid in my further interpretation and reflexivity.

Another way I have strengthened my data collection is the use of validity where a “researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 199), like member checking and triangulation. Once initial themes were determined, I sent the themes to my research participants to see if they felt the themes interpreted their experiences. By triangulation, I also used document analysis, such as examining research participants’ university websites to determine the feel for campus climate for LGBTQ+ people. In doing so, I intended to compare their experiences to how the campus portrays their support for marginalized communities.

Protection of Human Subjects

All research was conducted with approval from the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign’s Office for the Protection of Research Subjects. The Office for the Protection of Research Subjects granted approval and authorized the use of human subjects for the research on May 26, 2021. After my preliminary defense, it was recommended by my committee to conduct follow up interviews and add additional research participants, so an amended Institutional Review Board protocol was approved on November 11, 2021.

Participation in the research study was voluntary and informed consent was received from all participants. The intended research was determined to only contain minimal risk to participants. Due to the nature of their professional position and discussion of their sexuality, risks of participation included emotional concerns from participants sharing troubling stories and reliving traumatic experiences. During the initial interview after the consent form was reviewed,

it was mentioned participants may experience anxiety and mental stress, and support was available to them if they felt they needed to check in with a professional.

The identified benefits were justified and outweighed the risks of what their narratives can do to bring to light data for this under researched area. All participants shared the importance of this study and understood what these narratives and stories can do to ensure educators and university leaders begin to instill change at their institutions.

Anonymity was stressed during all aspects of the interview process. Participants selected their own pseudonyms. Throughout the interview process, the research journal was maintained to mark areas during the interview where participants explicitly mentioned they did not want a portion of their interview mentioned in this study. To aid in anonymity, I conducted the interviews via Zoom, which supported the participant in identifying a space and time that worked best for them to share their story as some may feel uncomfortable sharing their stories openly. Additionally, having the interviews through Zoom assisted in being able to outreach to a wider audience as costs of traveling were not a concern.

Participant Recruitment

A recruitment flyer (see Appendix A) was created that included details of the study and posted on two Facebook pages: “LGBTQ Research and Researchers in Higher Education” (public, over 3,100 members) and “LGBTQIA+ Affinity Higher Education” (private, over 3,000 members). The criteria for the selection of participants were:

- Are 18 years of age or older;
- Self-identify as gay or bisexual man;
- Self-identity as Latino or Black;
- Currently work (or have worked) at an institution of higher education; and

- Currently hold (or have held) a senior leadership position (academic or administrative).

Interested participants contacted me via email and cell phone. Within a week, I received two emails, one text, and a Facebook comment of interested participants. Of the four inquiries, three resulted in confirmed participation. Once confirmed, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved consent form was sent to each participant and an initial interview was scheduled via the Zoom platform.

After the preliminary defense, the committee recommended to recruit additional participants. Snowball sampling was used to recruit one additional participant. The recruitment flyer was updated with new dates and sent to participants who helped in sharing with colleagues who may be interested in participating in this study.

Data Collection Techniques

Zoom interviews were conducted from September 1, 2021, through February 28, 2022. All four participants received confirmation of scheduled interviews. During the initial email, the consent form was reviewed and an overview of two additional interviews was provided. The researcher obtained verbal consent to record interviews. The expectation was set that the second and third interviews would be scheduled within the next few weeks to prevent too much from passing between interviews. The Zoom platform allows for live transcription to be recorded as part of the video recording. All interviews were conducted using the Zoom platform, recorded, and through the Zoom capabilities, the transcription was also downloaded. The Zoom platform was used because it offers the ability to communicate with individuals across a larger area and time zones (Archibald et al., 2019), making outreach and recruitment of participants an easier

task. Additionally, the Zoom platform can securely record and store sessions, which is important for the protection of overly sensitive information (Archibald et al., 2019).

When coordinating interviews, no specific availability was given to participants. Due to the COVID-19 global pandemic, most higher education institutions have moved their meetings remotely, so participants were able to decide if they wanted the interview during their regular work hours or after work hours. It was up to the individual participant to decide whether to use a Zoom background or keep that feature off to let the interviewer know their location. This was important to note as these details may inform participant's comfort level if they chose to interview in their office during work hours or if they selected to interview at home after work hours to main their confidentiality.

An interview protocol was developed using Seidman's (2006) phenomenological interview protocol (see Appendix B). Questions for each of the three interviews were developed with the intent to continue and build off the previous interview. During the initial interview, the interview protocol was outlined with each participant. At the completion of the initial interview, the second and third interviews were scheduled for the next 2 consecutive weeks to allow for increased availability with time in between for reflection. Each of the three interviews varied between 60 to 90 minutes in length.

The Zoom platform allowed for the download of the transcription of each of the recorded sessions. The transcripts were then copied and pasted into a word document where a general clean up occurred by using the recorded video as a guide. Even though participants were asked for their name and title in the first interview, when the transcripts were cleaned, participants were asked to select their own pseudonym, and in a few sentences, describe why they selected that

name. It was made clear after each interview session all Zoom recordings and transcripts would be destroyed by June 2022. Nobody but the researcher had access to the research materials.

The collected data was cleaned and analyzed for clarity. Although the Zoom platform allowed for the download of transcripts, the transcription was not 100% accurate and unfortunately did not capture certain words or phrases used during the interview. As the researcher, I speak both English and Spanish, and one of the participants would respond to my questions in both languages. To me, having the participant respond in both languages demonstrated an elevated level of comfort and trust; as a data collection technique, it made the transcriptions a challenge. An added task of the data analysis was going through this participant's interview and updating the transcript with the translation of their comments.

Follow up interviews were recommended to be completed after the preliminary defense, and a fourth interview was scheduled for three of the completed interviews. This fourth interview was scheduled like the previous interviews but was shorter in length. Questions for the follow up interview were more direct and did not follow a specific flow as they served as follow up and clarifying questions.

Data Analysis Procedures

Coding Software

To support in organizing and analyzing data from the interviews conducted, Taguette, a coding software, was used. The Taguette (n.d.) website described the tool as “a free and open-source text tagging tool for qualitative data analysis and qualitative research” (para. 1). Due to the number of interviews, this free software seemed like the most beneficial to analyze the data collected.

Data Analysis Process

As Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested, when working with qualitative data, sequential and multiple levels of analysis is recommended. Based on this recommendation, I followed these five steps in analyzing the data:

Step 1: Organize and Prepare the Data for Analysis

Data from all interviews was recorded, transcribed, cleaned, and noted in the previous section.

Step 2: Read All the Data

All transcribed data was read to gain an opportunity to reflect on the overall meaning. Notes from the research journal were reviewed to ensure comments made during interviews added meaning to the interviews. For example, general observations of demeanor and tone during interview were noted for follow up and added context.

Step 3: Start Coding All the Data

Using the Taguette software, the coding process allowed for sections of interviews to be highlighted and noted. Using the recordings as a guide, several rounds of reviewing transcripts allowed for coding. Using preliminary themes as a guide, a codebook was created that allowed for a creation of categories to be later narrowed down to themes.

Step 4: Generate a Description and Themes

Themes were created from codes that then became major findings to aid in the further analysis of the data. After the themes were created, the list of themes and sample quotes from transcripts were sent to each participant to conduct member checking. The goal of this step was to ensure the narratives collected accurately represented themes that rose from rounds of coding.

Step 5: Representing the Descriptions and Themes

The last step was to create a narrative of the findings that outlined the themes created by each of the different narratives. Specific quotes were selected for each theme to add substance and evidence to the narrative analysis.

Of the 39 codes created, the following eight themes arose from the narratives:

- Microaggressions;
- Campus Climate;
- Homophobia and Racism;
- Intersecting Identities;
- Intentionality of Dress or Attire and Mannerisms or Tone;
- Navigating System of Higher Education;
- Importance of Mentorship; and
- Loving Oneself.

In the next chapter, I discuss the research findings.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to uncover the lived experiences of gay Latino and gay Black administrators (GLBA) working at higher education institutions. Specifically, this study highlighted the navigational capital each participant underwent in reaching senior level positions at their respective institutions and identified key recommendations university leaders can implement in supporting the development of GLBA. There were three guiding research subquestions:

1. What perceived challenges (internal or external) do GLBA believe they are facing when they are applying for or accepting a position?
2. Once a GLBA has attained a leadership position, what are the ongoing challenges and strategies he/they implement to confront homophobia and heterosexism?
3. What personal qualities and characteristics limit or create the opportunity for GLBA to become leaders?

This chapter presents key findings from multiple interviews with four participants. Included in this chapter are the profiles of each participant, discussion of codes, themes that emerged in participant interviews, and finally, an analysis on how their responses are connected to the guiding research subquestions.

Participant Overview

The participant's ages ranged from 36 to 49 and all work(ed) at public higher education institutions (one of the four participants has since left higher education). Table 1 shows the demographics of the participant. The participants identified as gay Latino and Black men and hold or have held a high-level administrator position at their respective campus. All shared

similar struggles growing up as first-generation college students where culture and religion played a role in their upbringing. Their professional oversight in their roles demonstrate they all care about supporting students and identifying equity gaps at their institution. They all shared insight in how they perceive their own intersecting identities and how their identities allow or prevent them from performing in professional spaces.

Table 1

Demographic and Overview Profile of Participants

Pseudonym	Identities	Role on campus	Type of institution	Age	Highest degree	College generation status
James Hughes	Queer, Black, male	Assistant Vice President and Dean of Students	25,000 FTE, public, HSI, 4-year university	37	PhD	First-generation
Juanito	Black nonbinary Queer / trans cis Black man	Director of Multicultural Affairs	32,900 FTE, public, HSI, 4-year university	36	PhD	First-generation
Marcos	Gay, man of color, Mexican American	Assistant Vice President, Access and Diversity Dean	26,000 FTE, public, HSI, 4-year university	49	PhD	First-generation
Salvador	Gay, Latinx, cisgender, Cuban		15,000 FTE, public, HSI, community college	46	PhD	First-generation

Note. FTE = full-time enrolled; HSI = Hispanic serving institution.

Participant Profiles

This section presents brief backgrounds of the participants in alphabetical order to provide the reader additional information on each of the participants interviewed. During the

closing of each interview, participants were asked to provide a pseudonym they would like to use and, in a few sentences, provide an explanation and description for the name they selected. Additionally, to support the reader, participants were asked to describe themselves (i.e., typical dress/attire) and physical appearance. These additional descriptors added some significance to each participant's personality and richness to their testimonios.

James Hughes

James Hughes was a 37-year-old man who identified as a queer, Black man. At the time of the study, he served as the associate vice president and dean of students. In his role, he oversaw departments that provide academic, personal, and career related resources to students. In addition, in his oversight, he looked at policies and procedures and identified systematic concerns that impact students. He has been working in higher education for over 15 years. When asked about his pseudonym, he provided the following description:

This name is constructed from two of the most influential scholars who continue to shape/inform my leadership, advocacy, and fight for justice: James Baldwin and Langston Hughes. Both scholars were queer men of color who demonstrated the ability to speak their truth, push against the norm, and use their brilliance to empower and elicit change. Because of them, and many nameless others who died doing same, this world is more equitable and just.

James Hughes grew up in a devout Christian home where his parents' instilled values of justice and the importance of honoring his ancestors. His parents taught him the importance of community and value of love, but throughout his interview, described his struggle of loving himself. He remembers growing up hearing homophobic and other problematic comments; as a result, it silenced him and made him mindful of how he spoke and dressed. Although

challenging, James Hughes persevered and entered higher education where he earned his bachelor's and PhD degrees and now serves as a senior administrator at a public higher education institution.

James Hughes can best be described as eclectic and inspired by people, culture, and fashion. He is intentional of his daily attire to express himself, a reflection of his mood and where he is in life at that moment. During interviews, he wore a collection of blue and green blazers with flower pins, jewelry on his fingers, and black and gold rimmed glasses that, in my opinion, made a fashion statement.

Juanito

Juanito was a 36-year-old who identified as a Black nonbinary queer/trans cis Black man. Juanito has worked in higher education as a professional staff member for 7 years but has prior experience as a resident advisor, totaling their experience in higher education to about 15 to 16 years. In their time as a professional staff member, they oversaw the department of multicultural affairs and have been heavily involved in roles supporting the LGBTQ+ and Black communities. More recently, they have taken on a consulting role for higher education for the last 4 years and are now focusing their career on the entertainment industry. Additionally, Juanito is also teaching as a faculty member at a private higher education institution. When asked why they chose "Juanito" as their pseudonym, they stated it is a name their uncles (the ones they liked) called them growing up, which always makes them smile.

Juanito shared their experiences growing up in a religious home. As a Jehovah witness, they remembered being teased for being queer and effeminate. Since they could remember, they have always felt "different/weird" and described the pressure they felt in "performing" or playing a "role" in fitting in for their family, their religion, and their school. Furthermore, they

described that as a Jehovah's witness, attending postsecondary education was not an option as it was frowned upon. It was when they were in sixth grade when they visited their first college campus that they became enamored with being a college student. They later shared how during their sophomore year of high school, they called the admissions office at the nearby campus to request an information packet, and since then, made it a goal to attend higher education. In a way, they felt alone going through this process as no one in their family had ever navigated these waters and had to find a way to make it there on their own. Years later, they now hold a bachelor's degree, master's degree, and PhD degree.

Juanito described themselves as fashionable even when they are dressed down. They enjoy wearing clothing labels (i.e., Coach, Louis Vuitton) because growing up poor they remember wanting wonderful things and wearing expensive labels provides them status. They were well put together and considered their look as studious. They were feminine and embodied a "baby André Leon Talley" who was a groundbreaking African American fashion editor for Vogue magazine, in the sense of how they dress. They described wearing heels and capes when they visit campuses. During interviews, it was noted how expressive they were with their hands. Additionally, they have a feminine demeanor and had their nails painted.

Marco

Marco was a 49-year-old who identified as a queer gay man of color, specifically Mexican American. At the time of the study, he served as an assistant vice president for student affairs. In his role, he strengthened the pipeline for historically excluded, underrepresented students on campus. He oversaw programming in K-12, federal grants for college access, and university programs that ensured all students are college ready and funneled through campus retention programs. Marco explained his role is not just about supporting students but also

finding ways of pushing and holding administration accountable for supporting minorities at their campus. Marco has been working in higher education since 1997 when he was a senior office assistant, totaling 25 years. When asked why he chose “Marco” for his pseudonym, he shared it was in honor of a friend, saying:

The reason for that name is because my very close friend, kind of in an undefined romantic relationship, died very suddenly when I left Texas. He was going to come visit and we were talking about perhaps moving in together. He wanted to relocate here to be with me. Unfortunately, that never came to be. That was probably the closest I’ve been to being in a relationship. We had been friends for about 15 years.

Marco described his childhood experience as nurturing and mentioned he lucked out by having supportive parents. His family was adamant about providing and exposing him and his siblings to opportunities. He grew up in Mexico and was raised Catholic. As much as religion played a role in his upbringing, he mentioned the practices were not forced on him and only felt it was part of their culture. Additionally, Marco’s parents always demonstrated their children’s needs always came first. Marco’s sister was handicapped, so his parents decided for her to get the proper medical attention, education, and opportunities, they needed to relocate to the United States. He felt all his success is owed to his sister who was the “engine” that propelled his family to pursue opportunities in the United States.

One thing Marco struggled with when coming to the United States was the language barrier. Little by little, Marco and his family learned about access to higher education, and as a first-generation college student, Marco found himself in college. Marco never felt the need to “come out” to his family because his education and succeeding in college took precedent. He felt the culture he was brought up in allowed him to explore and not be judged by his parents.

Academia was a redeeming quality for Marco; his pursuit of college degrees allowed him in spaces of power normally taken by White students. Through his academic and professional experiences, Marco now felt like these intersecting identities are compliments to who he is but does not let those identities define him.

Marco described himself as a man presenting with masculine traits. However, he further explained he does present some feminine qualities with his hands, arms, and his eyes. Additionally, another subtle way he shares his identities is when he introduces himself, he always includes his preferred pronouns, which for people in the “know” attribute this to an ally or part of the LGBTQ+ community. When conducting a presentation or meeting campus partners, he wears a suit and tie, and overall, attempts to fit in with the rest of the campus community. Marcos also described, at times, he does choose to “shock” people by inserting gay culture references in conversations (e.g., mentioning *Queer Eye* on Netflix) just to see how people react. An important thing to note about Marco’s presenting identities was that he was intentional of his “look” to gain advantages in sitting in spaces that might include White cisgender Republican Mormon men. If he did not identify as a man, these spaces may not have let him in.

Salvador

Salvador was a 46-year-old who identified as a Latinx, cisgender, gay man. At the time of the study, he served in a dean role and oversaw his institution’s student equity and learning support programs. In his role, he oversaw the learning resource center, the dual enrollment program, and learning communities which served and supported the Latinx and African American communities. He described his work as operating by three rules; everything he does needs to: (a) build skills for career development, (b) build skills for academic preparation, and

(c) have a culturally responsive approach. Salvador's first career was in the corporate field, and he transitioned to higher education at the age of 35. He has been working in higher education for 11 years. When asked to select a pseudonym, he chose Salvador because he likes the art of Salvador Dali.

Salvador identified as Cuban American and grew up in a male-dominated, *machista*, and Christian household. In the area he grew up, Salvador and his siblings were one of the few Latinx families in their community. He remembered being picked up from school by his grandparents and feeling embarrassed because they did not speak any English. Salvador described having to Americanize his name to fit in with his classmates. It was not until he turned 7 that his family decided to move from Atlanta to Miami, where it was known to have a Cuban ethnic enclave. After this move, he felt more connected to his community and comfortable speaking Spanish with his classmates. Growing up as Pentecostal Christian, he remembered how his parents and siblings followed their religion while not feeling connected to any religion himself. Salvador described how most Latinx families frown upon men being effeminate and how his father would catch Salvador with a limp wrist and being scolded for not acting "man enough." Even after coming out at the age of 18, Salvador described not wanting to act effeminate to reject this part of his gay identity.

As a first-generation college student in the early 1990s, Salvador described experiencing microaggressions from his academic advisor led him to not pursue higher education right away and led him to work at a security firm, which he considered a very "macho job." It was not until the age of 24, when he was offered a promotion, he decided to return to higher education and earn his first college degree. Through his professional growth in the security firm, Salvador found himself continuing his education to earn his master's degree. Throughout this time, he

remembered being mindful of his effeminate qualities to ensure they remained checked, almost like a survival mechanism. It was not until he was asked by a colleague about teaching criminal justice courses that Salvador found himself working in the field of higher education. At this point, he earned a second master's degree and completed a PhD program. After the teaching opportunity fell through, Salvador found himself working his way up to his current position in higher education.

Salvador described himself as expressive but does not consider his mannerisms to be feminine or masculine. He does not pay attention to the tone of his voice but is more intrigued about what he is saying. During interviews, Salvador wore polo shirts with the university logo and described himself as being intentional about what he wears to present in a professional manner and look "presentable."

Interview Observations

After the first half of each of the initial interviews, participants warmed up to me and demonstrated trust by openly sharing about their life and challenges they have faced. As all their stories resonated with my own stories, my nodding and reactions during their responses created a comradery between us. Marco demonstrated his comfort and trust in various moments, and some of his responses to my questions were given in Spanish because he knew I also spoke the language. This comfortability was helpful in creating a space of community with each participant. During interviews, Marco was located at home during one of his days off and in his office during work hours. His demeanor and approachability during interviews truly felt like talking to a friend. Throughout all the interviews, Marco was open in sharing stories and did not hold back on opening about his experiences. During the last interview Marco acknowledged the importance of this work and expressed excitement in reading the results of this study.

James Hughes participated in the interviews during work hours and demonstrated comfortability with me in openly sharing about his experiences growing up, family background, and challenges he experienced in getting to where he is now. At various times, James Hughes demonstrated he understood the need for this work in how he responded to the questions, offering additional context and examples to further elaborate the challenges he has faced and continues to face as a gay Black administrator. Like Marco, at the end of the last interview, he expressed excitement to read the results of this study and recommended I follow up with all participants to convene a meet and greet via Zoom.

Of all four participants, Salvador was the only participant while open in sharing his experiences, who continually reminded me about the confidentiality of the study. Often during the interviews, he would say, “please don’t include this in your dissertation” for fear of retaliation or uncovering his identity. There were moments during questioning he was holding back from offering additional information about his experiences. All interviews occurred while he was in his office, but were conducted after 5 p.m. once everyone had left for the day. He was also the only participant who shared he did not want to be contacted after the results of the study were published.

Juanito joined the interviews from home during their busy days. They shared early on the importance of this study and committed to provide as much information about their experiences as possible to ensure their stories were presented to the academy. Throughout the interviews, they openly shared insights and continually reminded me during questioning their decision to leave higher education due to their experiences.

Presentation of Findings

Coding Process

After 12 interviews were transcribed and reviewed, they were coded using Taguette, a coding software, according to the procedures outlined in the methodology section of Chapter 3. During the coding process, 39 codes were created and identified in all three phenomenological interviews and follow up interviews. Table 2 details the 39 original codes identified from the interviews.

Table 2

Original Codes Used to Analyze Data Across all Three Interviews

Codes	Number of highlights throughout interviews
Accountability	1
Advocating/others	7
Belonging	6
Burden	1
Campus climate	15
Coming out	9
Community support	7
Diversity	1
Dress attire/mannerisms	29
Educational trajectory	4
Family values	6
Homophobia	19
Homophobia in high school	2
Identity	37
Imposter syndrome	9
Interesting	7
Intersectionality	10
Experience while interviewing	6
Leaving higher Ed	8
Loving oneself	23
Machismo	2
Mental Health	5
Mentorship	58

Table 2 (cont.)

Codes	Number of highlights throughout interviews
Microaggressions	18
Navigation	28
Performing	7
Physical description	7
Power	7
Privilege	5
Professional plans	19
Racism	9
Recommendations for campus leadership	6
Religion	4
Safety on campus	4
Staying in higher Ed	11
Thriving	4
Trauma	8
Validation	1

Finding Themes

Once all coding was completed, it was essential to revisit the research questions and identify themes in the data. Ryan and Bernard (2003) argued evaluating text comprises several steps “(1) discovering themes and subthemes, (2) winnowing themes to manageable few (i.e., deciding which themes are important in any project), (3) building hierarchies of themes or code books, and (4) linking themes into theoretical models” (p. 85). When reviewing the collected data, coding occurred naturally when a participant mentioned a noteworthy comment or story. Always keeping in mind the intended research questions, coding the data allowed for mapping potential themes across all interviews. Ryan and Bernard (2003) contended, “you know you have found a theme when you can answer the question, what is this expression an example of?” (p. 87). After looking at the codes and the number of times that code was highlighted, it was

important to link the top codes with the research questions to observe the emerging themes.

Table 3 demonstrates the emerging themes and their connection to the research questions.

Table 3

Emerging Themes

Research questions	RQ1. What perceived challenges (internal or external) do GLBA believe they are facing when they are applying for or accepting a position?	RQ2. Once a GLBA has attained a leadership position, what are the ongoing challenges and strategies he/ they implement to confront homophobia and heterosexism?	RQ3. What personal qualities and characteristics limit or create the opportunity for GLBA to become leaders?
Themes	<p>Microaggressions: Participants shared examples of microaggressions when applying for positions and while collaborating with colleagues.</p> <p>Campus Climate: Participants shared the importance of the overall campus climate in deciding when to stay or when to leave a professional position.</p>	<p>Homophobia and Racism: Participants discussed instances of homophobia and racism while working amongst colleagues.</p> <p>Intersecting Identities: Participants discussed how their intersecting identities played a role in how they maneuvered professional spaces.</p> <p>Intentionality of Dress/Attire and Mannerisms/Tone: Participants discussed their intention to wear certain clothes and speak/act a certain way to “fit” into heteronormative society.</p>	<p>Navigation System of Higher Education: Participants shared examples they have used to navigate the system of higher education to reach their position of power.</p> <p>Importance of Mentorship: Participants discussed how mentorship has played an important part of their professional growth and development.</p> <p>Loving Oneself: Participants discussed identity politics and how they learned importance of loving themselves.</p>

The themes that emerged from the data come from reflections and insights from GLBA currently in the field of higher education. To engage with their stories, testimonio was used as the methodological approach in presenting the data. Huber and Cueva (2012) contended:

within the field of education, *testimonio* continues to develop as a powerful methodological approach that uncovers systematic subordination of Chicanas/Latinas . . . [where it] allows reflective of collective experiences, political injustices, and human struggles that are often erased by dominant discourses. (p. 392)

As discussed in Chapter 3, the purpose in using testimonio as a theoretical approach resulted in much needed understanding on how GLBA have built solidarity and resiliency through their professional experiences, and in some ways, resisted the dominant culture. The following section presents an overview of participant's testimonios where they discuss their experiences, thoughts, and reflections during their tenure in higher education.

Microaggressions

The first theme focused on participants experiencing microaggressions when applying for professional positions and instances when they felt slighted by colleagues. The term microaggression is used to describe, "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (Sue et al., 2007, p. 271). This definition has been expanded to include not just racial slights but also slights against gender, disability, and sexual orientation (Alleyne, 2004; Evans & Broido, 2002; Sue, 2010; Swim et al., 2001; Tatum, 2000).

Marco shared a recent experience while applying to a new role and the intentionality he undertook when sitting in interview spaces and deciding whether to move forward in the process. Due to his own knowledge of microaggressions, he mentioned his hyper sensibility to notice slights, saying:

Believe you me I've been interviewing, you know, not just right now but in the past. I didn't even think . . . if those [instances where] microaggressions. But really, I mean, I'm very trained to see [microaggressions] and to pick it up and hear it. But you know, and even though you know you're hypersensitive when you're interviewing. I didn't pick it up. I mean of course I've had microaggressions elsewhere, but not when I'm interviewing.

Although he has not experienced microaggressions during interviews, he described how he would manage responding to any negative perceptions of his intersecting identities, sharing:

And they probably know better . . . than to ask. Because if they were to say something ignorant, I would not have any qualms stopping the conversation and saying, hey, let me tell you this is wrong, let me interrupt your privilege right now, because I've done that a couple of times here. So, it was always in the back of my mind like . . . how I'm going to be received and perceived. So, I think for me, it was kind of in the back of my mind how am I going to be treated now. So yeah, that does go into play when helping me decide where I apply and why I'm applying.

James Hughes discussed how being intentional about what he wears and how he speaks during interviews had played a role in how he expresses his identities:

I've always thought about do I wear jewelry or do I wear certain things in interviews.

Will I even get an on-campus interview or will I get a second interview if I wear certain

things, or if I speak in a certain tone of voice, and I have found, especially as I've been growing in my career that I received jobs, second round interviews, when I did not wear jewelry when I did not dress in lots of colors or wear certain accessories, I was more likely to get an interview if I just wore a very plain black or blue suit, no adornment no jewelry. Same content [during interview] right, same answers to the questions but the only difference was really [my] attire.

James Hughes later shared his experience when after applying for a position, he decided not to pursue because of how he felt after the interview, saying:

I have turned down many jobs, jobs that I was confident that I would get . . . because I just did not feel a sense of belonging, I really felt traces of homophobia, racism. I always remember an example of when I did an interview. The first-round interview was a phone interview, so they did not see what I look like. And this was in the south, and going to the on-campus interview, there was a, the head of the search committee, which was a White lady, I believe, and she came to the hotel to pick me up when I came down the stairs or down the elevator . . . to meet the person I could notice that the person was looking for me. So, I went up to the person [and] I said, oh you know, are you such and such from such and such institution, and the person said, yes how may I help you? And I said, oh, I am James Hughes, and the person looked at me in shock and said YOU [emphasis added] are James Hughes! Oh, my goodness I thought you were going to be White, and oh my goodness I thought, I mean everyone's going to be so surprised at this institution that you're not White, oh my gosh, your accomplishments, wow you're not White! And in that moment, right, as I had to get in this person's car, I really wanted to leave . . . and say, never mind, but I did go through with that interview. But on the plane ride home, I

immediately emailed the head of the committee to say, you know what, thank you for your time, however, I am withdrawing my application for this institution from this search. So, I think I've gotten myself to the point in my life where I've realized that if an institution is unable to accept and love me as me as my authentic self and they're unable to embrace that, then that is not the right institution for me, because I know that I'm going to be extremely unhappy.

Salvador also shared how he mentions his partner during interviews to put his identities out there and gauges the responses of interview committees to determine if the position is a right fit. He shared:

When people ask me why do [I] want to work here I always talk about my partner, [and I introduce myself] as a gay Latinx man. You know, it's important for me [to] not be inferring things, but as people need to know that I'm not going to tiptoe around my identities, you know, my identities are who I am, they inform the way I do my work, that if you're not on board with that or that makes you [not like me], [then] we're not a good match to begin with, and I'll take my skill somewhere else.

Later in the interview, Salvador mentioned how experiencing microaggressions while working made him question his position at the campus. He provided several examples where he was asked to present to the campus community due to the nature of his role, saying:

So, I gave my speech [and] I remember one faculty member come to me and complimented me on how well I spoke English . . . those [comments] were very odd to me and so I don't let those kinds of things slide. And I remember talking to him directly and I said, what about me indicated to you that I possibly will not be able to speak English very well? And the person was very nice to me . . . because the problem is . . .

most people who do those kinds of things are ignorant to the fact that what they're doing is racist. And they think that they're giving you a compliment by the way that I phrased that question. They become immediately reflective about why they would ask something like that and when you're confronted with your own biases it's a flight or fight kind of thing.

Juanito shared several examples where they felt microaggressed for both their race and sexuality, by both heterosexual and people of color. In their examples, they shared how "being too Black" or "being too queer" was looked down upon. During this portion of the interview, Juanito became enthusiastic and expressive, waiving their hands and rolling their eyes to show disgust when remembering how they felt during these interactions, saying:

My boss told me, in one of my reviews, "I think you're too emotional," and I was like, well, what the *fuck* does that mean? [emphasis added] She was like, "I just think that you're just very emotional," and you say what's on your mind, and sometimes you have to be mindful about how that comes across to students and staff. And I was like, Oh, okay. So, what you're basically saying to me is that I'm too *effeminate*. That's the way I process it, I'm too *effeminate*. I speak up for myself, I stand up for myself and people in this department don't like it. But I think what was happening when I was in higher education, I think people saw me as queer and their inherent bias came out, and so that's why they treated me a certain type of way because of it. Whether it was racist, or whether it was homophobic, or if it was both. Having multiple conversations again about professionalism being coded as you're too Black, or you're too queer.

Participants shared numerous examples of microaggressions they have experienced while applying for jobs and attempting to be themselves in their day-to-day lives. These instances

demonstrated hidden and subtle comments and experiences that negatively impact their lives and the overall campus climate.

Campus Climate

As shared in the literature review of this study, Rankin (2005) examined the experiences of LGBT people at the national level, specifically to look at their opinions on campus climate, and their data demonstrated 73% of faculty, 74% of students, 81% of administrators, and 73% of staff described their campus climate as homophobic. For this study, participants collectively shared how the campus climate affected one or more of their intersecting identities and was a factor in their decision to remain employed at their college campus or leave for other professional opportunities.

James Hughes described his current experience of dealing with a toxic campus climate that impacts all his identities as he shared homophobic and racist experiences. Specifically, he shared how the added burden of having to educate leadership and the campus community is taxing and impacts his ability to want to remain employed at his campus, saying:

The campus climate currently is poor [and] very negative. I think that the microaggressions, the microinsults, the macroaggressions are felt by students, staff, and faculty and that is reflected on the latest campus climate survey that we did this last academic year. The climate is not well, especially for Black students, staff, and faculty on campus. It's tiring. I've worked my way up, yes, but I've had to move around a lot, and that too comes with its challenges. In many of those institutions, a part of me leaving, was that that climate in the culture was extremely toxic . . . and at this point in my life I'm really trying to think about where do I go from here? I'm 37 years old, and I'm already exhausted, mentally, physically, [and] spiritually drained. God willing, I have

many more years left professionally. So, I start to think about, [can] my body take this for another X number of years?

James Hughes later spoke on what it has been like working on campus in attempting to address the negative campus climate and the toll it has taken on his body, saying:

[In thinking about] changing campus climate, you must look at things systemically, you must look at processes and procedures, the competencies of staff and faculty [and] so many different things. Just saying, “Oh send people to a 1 day or 2-day training diversity training,” it’s not enough. If we really want to see change happen, you must approach it systemically. However, with what I have found and what I continue to deal with each day is resistance and push back. When you mentioned things, people don’t want to change, a lot of people will say, we don’t want to change. You’re constantly focusing on having to educate folks on why certain terms are problematic, why certain procedures and processes are problematic. And again, it takes a toll on your body, because that’s not my job. I have a very specific role in educating staff and faculty and administrators around the problematic comments that they make, as well as the racist and homophobic and misogynistic ways through which they continue to replicate inequity. *That’s not my role* [emphasis added].

Working at a campus known for their large religious community, Marco shared how this impacted how his campus responded to the negative campus climate for LGBTQ+ students and what he looks for when considering his time to find another professional opportunity. Marco spoke about understanding his role in working at a religious institution and the duty he undertakes in supporting marginalized students. He stated:

Like the first semester that I was there I heard of five student suicides because there were LGBTQ identified. What plays into here is the predominant religion [at this campus], the Mormon [religion], they're not very tolerant about a lot of different things. So, a lot of the students who come out they feel [they] I want to be their authentic selves, but then if they do come out, then the family is going to shun them and then they're not going to have any sense of community. I have outlets, right, to connect with folks who are like minded, or you know have same interests or same identities as I do. So yeah, that does go into play when helping me decide where I apply and why I'm applying.

Marco then went on to offer recommendations on what campuses can include and implement to support the campus climate for marginalized communities. His recommendation really focused on all intersecting identities that may be marginalized on campus. He stated:

I think first [campuses] need to make sure that they have the infrastructure in place to support [marginalized communities]. Having the ability to have employee resource groups or affinity groups on campus that are either . . . gender identity based to have a network. [Or] provide resources . . . for you know, new professionals, so that they are able to see themselves as part of the fabric of the institution. I think, developing professional opportunities for staff or faculty or whatever it is administrators that talk about this, these lived experiences in, you know, whatever it is, to make sure that we are visible to make sure that there is a presence there. And that, to know that you will be respected and honored.

Marco later shared one of the reasons he decided to work at his current institution was his ability to have a Mexican American/Hispanic/Latino community, which they found was needed for their own development. Marco said:

So, when we talk about my ethnicity, my race, my culture, [those where] one of the things that attracted me to come here. [This institution] has the largest Mexican American, Hispanic Latino community in the state. And so, I knew that I was going to be able to build community right away too. So that . . . helped me kind of decide to come here. I saw the demographics and I thought there was a lot of things that we could do here.

For James Hughes, Marcos, and Juanito, campus climate not only affected the students they served but also their own survival being a gay Latino or Black administrator. The more they participated in speaking out against the injustices they experienced or how they intentionally attempted to hold administration accountable, the more it affected their desire to remain employed or reached their limit to leave their position.

Homophobia and Racism

In discussing their experiences working at institutions of higher education, participants discussed the role homophobia and racism played in their professional advancement. Throughout this theme, participants shared examples that highlighted the trauma they endured at their campus as they reached their senior level positions.

James Hughes described how being both Black and gay impacted relationships he has made on campus due to the constant homophobia and racism he has experienced. He stated:

I would argue that the campus in many ways is very homophobic, [the campus is] aware of the term racism but really struggles, it's definitely not anti-racist, we are not there yet. I've experienced many microaggressions and really macroaggressions. So, for example, I'll give you an example from my current institution, I was meeting with a high-level administrator who identifies as White and the person made comments around or assumed

that I was queer, I did not disclose that myself but said, “Well I’m sure as a gay person it must be difficult for you.” *And in my mind, I said, well how do you know I identify as gay?* [emphasis added].

He later went on to make the connection how experiencing homophobia and racism coupled with his age and class has also impacted his experiences. He shared:

It’s hard for me to talk about homophobia, without also talking about the intersections of race and class with that. I would also just add that being a Black queer male in academia . . . not only am I walking into spaces, thinking about my attire, but then I’m also thinking about, wait a minute, I’m also a Black person as well. And I know that people see that immediately. And that comes with some assumptions [and] judgment. I’m looking at the space and I don’t see anyone that looks like me as a Black queer male in that space. And . . . I’m going to add one more layer, age. And I think that’s something else that I think about in terms of my identity, my age, oftentimes I’ve been the youngest person in the room. So, when you couple . . . I’m Black, I’m queer, I’m younger than most people in the most other administrators with my title or above in the room, how that has felt, and how I have had to show up and be strategic in my presentation and efforts.

Salvador described an interaction he had with a White, heterosexual colleague. In the example, Salvador shared one of his duties in their role was to facilitate a survey that provides the university a score on how well the campus is doing as it relates to supporting the LGBTQ+ community. After the meeting, Salvador received pushback from a colleague about their concerns regarding the rating they received and proceeded to use a derogatory term against Salvador. He shared:

I was in a meeting [to discuss the survey] and I said, yes, we need to do this, and then after the meeting a colleague approached me and said, “You’re prohibited from doing this because we do not want there to be any [negative] rating . . . that [score] can negatively impact our campus.” That was one of my first casual interactions of homophobia and connection to performative attitudes about how things are on-campus. And he continued to be upset and then, I’m not going to repeat the word, but at the end of the meeting he called me something very homophobic. I thought, you decide to try to hurt me with those words, but all you’ve done this proved everything that I’ve said in this meeting, and [it] validates the reason why I need to leave here because of this toxic environment.

Juanito shared an interaction they had with their vice president of student affairs, to whom they reported. Their vice president identified as a Black, heterosexual woman who made comments to Juanito where they felt slighted when they attempted to advocate for additional services for the LGBTQ+ community. Juanito reported comments where their vice president questioned their credentials, which severely impacted their desire to remain employed at that institution. They shared:

So, I initially went in, thinking she’s all right, and you know how they always say you know, not all skin folks are kin folks. But in my mind, she really put on this really good front, like, you want to support Black and brown students here. She said, “You know, I know you’re queer I have a lot of queer constituents that I’m really cool with here.” And so, I think there was still also some tension between her [and I] because one, I was very forward and very well-liked by my students and specifically also with other staff members and there were things that I would say and do that was much more . . . I guess intentional. I was extremely intentional about the things that I said, and I did, and I

always had really good questions about why things were operating the way that they were operating. And so, I think she didn't like the fact that I was constantly questioning things that she was putting in place that didn't work, and so I found myself kind of butting heads with her. They were making decisions for queer students . . . so I know what I am talking about, it's not just me talking out of my ass, I've actually done the work. I'd bring it up in a funny way, and they'd look at me and think, who do they think they are? I just got to the point where I realized I gotta get the fuck out of here, I just gotta go.

The experiences participants shared demonstrated how day to day interactions created a negative campus climate, and as a result, questioned their desire to continue working at that institution. As members of marginalized communities, all participants shared examples of how their shared interests in doing diversity worked played a role in how the campus community interacted with them. Unfortunately, their experiences proved that without actively considering the ways all their identities play a part in how they maneuver campus spaces, universities are not retaining highly qualified administrators.

Intersecting Identities

Another theme that rose from the data was the role intersectionality plays in how participants understand and perform all their intersecting identities. Crenshaw (1990) considered intersectionality to map the intersections of race and gender by arguing race and gender account for the many ways identity is constructed considering the way our social world is developed. For participants, sharing examples on the ways their gender, race, and sexuality have played a role in their experiences working in higher education has provided key insights.

Briefly, James Hughes shared how he perceived all his intersecting identities and the struggles he has endured trying to manage all aspects of his identity in his attempt to thrive. He shared:

We talk about Blackness all the time and kind of what it means to honor our ancestors and how lessons learned and how our community really helps to shape us. When I think about some of my queer of color mentors not just in education but other work force, we do talk a lot about the intersections of race and class and gender and sexuality and what does it mean to be a Black, queer male, who was a first generation college student, who grew up in a working class family, who faced many struggles and traumas, who has faced abuse in relationships, and who struggled with mental health and wellness. *All of these things that I have struggled with. And in some entities and areas I still struggle with. We talk about this notion of, how do you get over [and] how do you keep going? How do you think about enduring and this notion of being able to thrive [emphasis added]?*

Salvador acknowledged and shared the more he moves up in the professional ladder, the less diverse it becomes. He explained knowing how his intersecting identities have shaped who he is has allowed him to be critical in these leadership spaces and attempt to hold people in power accountable, specifically as it related to hiring practices at his institution. In the example discussed next, Salvador described how in hiring a Black administrator just to check off a “diversity” box and not considering all intersecting identities may not be enough. Salvador shared:

Now, when we look at our student population 50% of our student population does identify as people of color. Yet when we look at our faculty, 75% to 80% are White, our staff, 75% to 80% are White. [These numbers] do not represent the student population,

should race and ethnicity or our identities be at the forefront of who we hire? No, but, you know, the higher up the ladder you go the less diverse it becomes. And so, where there's less diversity, it's easy, from that ivory tower to look down and say you're just hiring Black people for the sake of hiring Black people or hiring this ethnic group just to say you're hiring this ethnic group, without understanding the population where we live and the people who are applying for the job.

Juanito shared how their identities are not simply boxes they can check on and off as who they are encompasses all their identities simultaneously. Specifically, they shared an example of when they were asked to lead a student group on-campus and their supervisor asked if they were going to be "Black today" or "queer today" and the effects of maneuvering this experience.

Juanito said:

Once, in one of my positions I had, someone come to my office, and they asked me if I was "queer today," or if I was "Black today," and what I think they were trying to insinuate was this notion of like, [am I] able to put my identities into different boxes? like it's easy just to turn something off, and I was like, well, what do you mean? And they were like, well . . . the Black students needed help, and I'm going . . . well the Black students are still gonna get a Black, queer person to help them. And so, I think what I fully understand about my identity as a senior administrator, I think I have to navigate everything I'm doing from an intersectional lens. Like there is no way that I'm gonna come into student affairs or come into a speaking engagement or go to work [with] everything that comes with me is gonna always come with me, and, I think there's this sort of element of, like, me having to understand that the institution will tell you, oh,

bring your full self to work, and then they want to chastise you for bringing your full self to work [emphasis added].

Juanito later shared how bringing their whole self to work is a risk they were willing to take, saying:

What are the risks that I have to take to bring my full self into any position that I take? And am I comfortable with it? And I think for me, yes, but I know that the gospel I'm preaching is not the gospel a lot of people want to hear. *So, I think that for me, what does it mean to bring your whole self to work, and what risk or what problems or issues come with that and are you comfortable and capable of dealing with it? [emphasis added].*

Considering all of the intersecting identities of participants can be complex. No two participants will share the same experience maneuvering a system of higher education. However, what participants shared through the narratives exemplified the need for continual engagement in understanding how marginalized communities navigate their contested identities in spaces of power. As Bilodeau and Renn (2005) shared, folks in the LGBTQ+ community may experience an identity process at different points in their life, including when to share their sexuality. Deciding what identities are at the forefront like physical appearance versus sexuality, which can remain hidden, can shape their daily experiences.

Intentionality of Dress or Attire and Mannerisms or Tone

As GLBA working at institutions of higher education, one theme that came up in all four interviews was how each participant dealt with “performing” all their identities through how they dress to their mannerisms and tone of voice. Contesting how to perform in heteronormative and White spaces, participants shared examples of how their attire and mannerisms during meetings have impacted their daily lives. Mobley and Johnson (2019) argued “there are cultural norms

present that Black queer individuals often have to contend with due to the way in which their bodies are read and the heteronormative expectations that are placed on them, especially in educational settings” (p. 868). Furthermore, gay Latino and gay Black men are challenged with the notion their socially acceptable behavior is typically deemed hypermasculine and heterosexual (McCready, 2010), and their selected attire and mannerism can go against that norm. Participants were very conscious of how they were perceived, their radar was up, and how they dress and carry themselves was intentional and transgressive. In the examples presented next, participants shared the intentions they went through when selecting what to wear and how to manage their mannerisms and gender fluidity.

James Hughes talked about learning to watch his tone of voice and mannerisms growing up in a religious household and how more recently he had to contemplate how he presents himself on-campus. For James Hughes, being intentional on what he wore on-campus has led him to question how authentic he was being in front of colleagues. James Hughes stated:

I’ve played that game before . . . where I was very mindful of my tone of voice, and I would lower [and] deep my tone of voice. I would wear particular clothes that I knew was not me and did not make me happy. I did that performative act with my family for so many years. I didn’t even come out to my family until adulthood. So, this notion of having to perform . . . I’ve been doing that my whole life, and I continue to do it in spaces, but I still believe that now I’ve gotten myself to a point where . . . I’m more unapologetic. *I think about this all the time, and it goes back to my earlier point around how do I stay true to self and recognize that even though higher education claims it’s very liberal education, it continues to be very, very heteronormative [emphasis added].*

James Hughes went on to share the added task of considering what to wear depending on who he plans to meet on campus that day, saying:

So, for me every day I think about when I look at my schedule, and I look at who am I meeting with and that unfortunately dictates my attire. If I am just going to meet with students, and I have no other meetings, then you know, I may wear my scarves and a cape, you know it would be, quote unquote, *more*. I don't like to use the terms feminine or masculine, but . . . I will be more expressive and more artistic, more jewelry, and things. Whereas if I'm meeting with campus administration or meeting with the president, I am going to be in a suit, and I'm going to wear a coat and a blazer, no jewelry. If I'm interviewing, right, I'm going to come very conservative.

James Hughes went on to share the added burden and stress he undergoes in situations where he must continually be mindful of his tone of voice or how much jewelry he can wear to not bring added attention during meetings. He said:

I would . . . say that I never expected or anticipated the toll that all of this would take or have on my body, and always having to think about what I wear, what I say. How I speak, my word choice, my tone, it's *draining*. In addition to just having a very stressful job. These added things, just mentally, physically, spiritually, just taxed. *So, I have had to reconcile, how do I try to stay true to James Hughes? How do I play the game and navigate the politics, and at the same time, how do I care for myself? And how am I intentional about finding ways to refuel, because all of this has been quite draining* [emphasis added].

He later expanded on the added stress of being mindful of his tone of voice, what he chooses to say, and even the number of syllables he uses when speaking, sharing:

I can remember certain people just encouraging me to be mindful of what jewelry I wear and how I speak in certain settings. But I have had people say, you need to be more mindful of how you speak. Even more recently I was told that I needed to watch how many syllables I was using in certain spaces, that I should use one syllable words that my vocabulary is too much for the community.

James Charles later expressed the importance of feeling supported and celebrated and having supervisors that encouraged him to be himself. He said:

And to one of your earlier questions around what keeps me at places, and you know leads me to leaving places, anytime that I feel supported, where I feel celebrated where I feel like I can be my authentic self and truly thrive and do the good work that I feel that only that I choose but that I feel is a calling [emphasis added]. I've been very privileged to have supervisors that love to me, regardless of what I was wearing and, in fact, encouraged me to, to be me, whatever that meant look like, etc.

Marco shared how he has noticed he talks with his hands, and at times, felt his mannerisms are feminine. However, he shared he does not pay too much attention to those things as he felt it may take away from his work. He stated:

If I talk with my hands a lot you know, if one of those times . . . I maybe do an effeminate mannerism or something . . . I don't stop and think about it. I just like to let it out, let it happen because I don't want to be too self-conscious, because then that would take me away from being present and understanding the issues that we're dealing with a working with or working through . . . I don't let that bother me at all.

Marco later shared the way he dresses follows an unspoken expectation that comes from the “good old boys club” where he felt he needs to match the norm of “professional White male” attire. He shared:

There is a good old boys club here and you see it you know firsthand. It’s not disclosed or divulged anywhere but just by observation, this is how they dress . . . this the level of expectation I could match . . . so then if I want to gain access to that world, because it impacts my students, then that’s what I am going to have to do, because it doesn’t bother me one bit. But there are times that I’m not wearing a tie or anything, and I’m okay with that, because they know where I stand, and I don’t need to prove myself to anybody. Now with them, among them, amongst the White male Mormons, they have a standard they have to keep. Their expectation for “professional White male” is if you are White, Mormon, male, you are expected to wear a certain type of clothing.

Salvador discussed how his mannerisms during meetings are neither masculine nor feminine. While he mentioned he is expressive, he was conscious of how others will perceive him if he does not act or wear a specific type of outfit to follow a “professional code of conduct.” He shared:

You know I’m expressive, I’m always talking with my hands, I’m boisterous, I’m the kind of person that really enjoys speaking to a crowd. And so, you know, if you ask me if I walk around, you know, with my hands like this [*gestures limp hands*], I don’t do that, but I do have colleagues who are like that, for me, I’m always intentional about what I’m wearing because how others will receive me? Like for instance I came to work to present, if I’m presenting to other executives [or] to the president and presenting for people, I’m

wearing a suit. Because for me, it's more about professional code of conduct, rather than anything else. You know, you need to look *presentable*.

Juanito shared how they have grown into their current identity as a nonbinary person. Their intentionality of what they wear has changed since leaving higher education, but at the time, they were very conscious of what "professionalism in the workplace" meant, and for them, their attire was geared toward "performing" a norm. They stated:

When I go speaking on-campus, I intentionally will wear heels. I will intentionally wear, you know, a blouse, or I may intentionally throw on a caftan. *You know I'll throw on a little caftan what a cute little belt, you know I think for me my feminism, my feminine energy, I should say, my non-binariness my transness, all of that, it's something I've grown comfortable with, and at the time when I was in working in higher education, I don't think that I had the freedom, or even the mental space to engage it. So, I was basically again performing* [emphasis added]. I was performing the way that people wanted me to perform from my dress to the way I showed up in spaces to the things I said, and the things that I didn't say, like, it was all performance until I got to a point where I said I can't do this anymore and I left.

Juanito later shared their experience working in residential life where they oversaw a *professional's day* for students where students got to learn how to dress for interviews. Even then, Juanito remembered how challenging it was to engage in this heteronormative space. They shared:

I didn't have the level of knowledge or wokeness, or awareness that I have now to say, you know it's problematic to tell a cisgender male that they should wear a suit and tie because ultimately . . . professionalism has nothing to do, or it shouldn't have anything to

do with the way that you present. Professionalism is this idea that you would come in and do the job effectively. Like even now, at my current job, my current supervisor just wanted to know if I could do the job. That was it, he didn't care about my [painted] nails, he didn't care what I wore, he just wanted to know if I could do the job. And that's the thing that really bothers me, in the field [of higher education] we tell students, even if we do not tell them directly, how they're supposed to show up, they're supposed to look, in a quote unquote, corporate, organizational world.

Performing Gender. Participants shared the intentionality of selecting the type of outfit to wear to campus. Whether it was their intention to “fit in” or “stand out” and defy the norm, participants discussed the additional toll it takes for them to consider their dress and how/when to “perform” their identities. Salih (2007) critiqued the work of Judith Butler on “gender performativity” where they argued “one’s gender is performatively constituted in the same way that one’s choice of clothes is curtailed, perhaps even predetermined, by society, context, economy, etc. within which one is situated” (p. 56). Butler’s work focused the ways we all perform gender. In the context of this study, participants shared how they have contested gender norms by taking apart the clothes they wore and “modifying them in ways which will reveal the unnatural nature of gender” (Salih, 2007, p. 58). Salih and Butler contested by “acting” gender, humans are constructing heterosexual identities as natural. In this theme, participants highlighted the ways that by intentionally selecting their wardrobe or being mindful of their tone and mannerism they are choosing to perform a heterosexual/normal act. This intentionality can be described as a survival mechanism needed to navigate the system of higher education.

Navigating Systems of Higher Education

All four participants have endured navigating the system of higher education to get to where they are now. All shared examples and instances where learning to navigate the positive and negative experiences have led them to be better professionals. Some shared how creating intentional relationships allowed them the opportunity to create community while others discussed strategies for survival. In this theme, participants shared things they had to put in place to reach their position at their respective institution.

James Hughes shared due to the increase in microaggressions he has endured, his mental health has declined, and at times, has found himself considering whether remaining in higher education is best for him. He later shared strategies he has implemented in navigating the troubling times by creating a village of support that includes like-minded people who share some of his identities. He stated:

It's extremely challenging to navigate higher education, particularly as a queer administrator of color. Every day . . . I continue to experience imposter syndrome, microaggressions, macroaggressions, and microinsults. I continue to sit in spaces with people who do not look like me, with people who do not identify as queer. And it's tough. And it really impacts my own wellness and well-being. *I think I've had to intentionally go out and find people who embrace me and support me. And I think that in terms of my professional development I've created a network, a global network of people who are truly equitable and inclusive, and they have been the source of . . . my professional development [emphasis added].* I really had to pivot to really focus on the positive things in my life. The positive people who are bringing me joy, people that I'm learning from each day.

James Hughes shared the importance of finding and creating psychologically safe spaces to support their development and growth. He shared:

And I think that's probably one reason why I've spent so much time trying to think about positive leaders in my life who . . . have created psychologically safe spaces . . . that are inclusive and spaces that are equitable and spaces that are diverse. A group of people who you trust fully, as small as that number may be, this work comes with a lot of politics and a lot of greed, a lot of manipulation, a lot of self-interest, and it's very easy to get lost. It's very easy to get deceived. Developing a village, a group of people who you know you can trust is another strategy that I think has been very helpful in my life and in my success. And lastly, I don't know if I would still be here if it was not for therapy, if it was not for daily affirmations, if it was not for the self-care work, if it was not for [the] village that I have created for myself and for others, if it was not for [the acceptance] that I am worthy of love and life and happiness.

James Hughes later shared having his level of position comes with added trauma he was not prepared to endure. He mentioned the need to create intentional navigation to move up professionally and explained the toxicity he has received in senior level spaces. He shared:

That's where I've struggled with the most, how to sit in spaces where I blatantly see what's happening. And knowing that it is impacting me and trying to really understand how you navigate that, do I speak up in the moment, do I call the person out. If [I] call the person out respectfully or professionally. But if so, what are their potential outcomes for me? Will it take away opportunity, potential opportunities? Will I be quote unquote blacklisted? I've seen it happen to other queer people of color, who have spoken out, and then you start to wonder, how do I navigate this? What about me? You must know what

to expect, you have to know how to navigate campus politics, and you know that in taking on this kind of role you're in the spotlight. *I think personally I think that the hardest part for me that I guess I didn't expect is how hard it is to remain authentic to self* [emphasis added]. You can't trust certain people. People will smile on your face and use words against you.

Furthermore, James Hughes shared even the level of position he holds only offers him a certain amount of power, but it also comes with challenges he's had to maneuver through. He said:

So, I think that yes, my title has open certain doors for me to advocate. It's allowed me to be a guest at certain tables in certain meetings. *However, the other side of it, you still have to be mindful that I'm a Black queer male entering a space that I know was not built and made for me and how I navigate that. If you want to move up, this is the game that you have to play and how you have to play it* [emphasis added].

Marco shared the importance of also navigating higher education by being cognizant of how he is being perceived by others but also being intentional about surrounding himself with people who share similar viewpoints and can support his development. He stated:

So, it was always in the back of my mind like where am I going [and] how I'm going to be received and perceived. I think for me it's like, well, we want to be with people who are similar to us right. I think that's part of our human nature. So if I go to conferences I do seek [similar people] out, you know like the knowledge communities, right, like I'm there with our Latinx professional colleagues, gender and sexuality groups, to seek them out because you know you also have to build those kinds of networks right, not just the professional level but also at the identity level, how they're going through maybe

experiences in their own home campuses. *So, I do gravitate towards those identities because I mean it's helpful for me to know that there's more people like me out there. And that together...we are not alone; I know there's more of us out there that think we are. So, to me, that is important to build those relationships now [emphasis added].*

For Marco, knowing who he is and having reassurance of his identity has allowed him to navigate his professional trajectory and feels confident in applying for higher level positions.

Marco stated:

I knew that if I wanted to at least be seen as a successful queer brown man, I needed to have certain things attached to me like good paying job, a good education, good friends, strong network, and be seen as a cycle breaker of sorts. So, it's kind of difficult to really pinpoint how that drove me to where I am today, because I've always been open to different opportunities. So, when it came to my own sexuality, you know, I think the catalyst for being here, it just kind of happened, right, because I was so comfortable in who I was and who I am and my role. I just wanted to be able to have access to things that otherwise I wouldn't have been able to. So, to have this perceived lifestyle that it's acceptable if you're a gay person, but it was more about, I think being comfortable in navigating my environments in a professional, personal, and social settings that I didn't have to compromise, or hide the fact that I was a queer person. So, I think to me that that reassurance and confidence is really kind of what drove me to continue to explore and to do more. So, to me, it all ties together to not only yourself or sense of self and identity in terms of your culture your traditions, your ethnicity, but also you know who you are because it shouldn't be a part of how you make decisions.

Salvador shared in various, professional spaces he tends to gravitate toward people with similar identities as a strategy in navigating the campus politics. He said:

And in my experience, gay people find each other, very quickly. You know I gravitate towards you know people who are like minded. The VP who's gay and Latinx understands intimately already without even having spoken to me, knows the prejudices and themes that I've experienced higher up the ladder, because he's lived those experiences too, and not to say that those experiences are homogenized across all gay Latinx men, there are a lot of commonalities and less outliers when identities match. So, for me, I have benefited greatly from both.

Navigating the system of higher education has allowed participants to develop strategies of success and led them to where they are today. Being true to themselves and surrounding themselves with likeminded individuals has supported their navigational trajectory. Although they all demonstrated understanding that not all experiences are the same, partnering up with other folks who share similar identities has shaped how they strategize in building successful partnerships, like intentional mentorship opportunities.

Importance of Mentorship

Through their professional experiences, participants have learned to navigate politics and a professional system that has significantly impacted their trajectory. The importance of mentorship was found in all interviews as a significant strategy in both their own professional development and the development of their colleagues who shared similar identities. All shared how they defined mentorship and later highlighted examples of how they have strategically sought mentorship and acknowledged the relevance of paving the way for other marginalized communities to be mentored.

Defining Mentorship. James Hughes shared what mentorship and sponsorship means to them and how they have come to develop those skills in providing these opportunities for students and colleagues who share similar identities. Through their own experiences, mentorship and sponsorship has become a “duty” they have undertaken. They shared:

And for me, mentorship is really around sharing knowledge, sharing love, sharing resources, being there as a support, when someone needs you. And those are elements of mentorship, that I still to this day carry with me. This notion that extends beyond support resources, sharing knowledge, and being there for someone but take it to the next level around more a deeper connection around, I’m invested in you. *I want to not only support you, but I want to help you get yourself to that next step in your career in your life, I’m willing to put my name, my reputation, my resources. I’m willing to extend those things to a person because I believe in them so much. I think about what that looks like to sponsor [and] mentor someone. I mean I think for me, I see it as a duty as a responsibility to help other queer people of color, especially or people of color [emphasis added].* And I love it . . . I love being able to provide the same love and support that others have given me to other people and as I look at my own growth and development and where I want to be.

Marco shared how he defines mentorship and the role he has taken in being a mentor to young Latinx men who may have never met someone with a PhD. He shared:

I think for me a mentor is someone who first of all who cares, it’s someone who has their best interests at heart, it’s someone who has already gone through some challenges of their own, and they want to make sure that [others] don’t go through same experiences as they did. I had a group of students at the end of a speaking engagement I did, they approached me . . . [and] they said, well first of all, before we go anywhere, we just want

you to know that you are the first Latino male that we know with a PhD. *And I was like, that was so earth shattering for me, because I know that coming from Texas I mean, there's not a whole lot of us with doctoral degrees right* [emphasis added]. And then a lot of those students that approached me at the time, you know have gone on and gotten their masters. They are now exploring their PhD. So . . . that's a simple interaction that we had.

Salvador's definition of mentor included preparing mentees to take on his role when he leaves. Although his mentee's identities did not matter much, Salvador shared benefitting from a professional relationship that included being mentored by a gay Latinx professional. He shared:

A mentor is somebody that recognizes your potential and helps you cultivate skills that you have and helps you build the skills that you need to move into better roles professionally, personally, socially, those kinds of things. I train people to take my job, I don't expect them to stay in the same position. I want [them] to learn what I'm doing and how the upper-level operations happen so that [they] can understand that and move into what it is that [I] do, for me, a mentor is somebody that doesn't follow a formula that follows you.

While working in higher education, Juanito shared how they did not receive proper mentorship and now they want to instill this connection with someone who may be going through similar experiences. They stated:

I wanted other queer students on campus to know that they had somebody in their corner in ways that I didn't. Mentoring is basically one opening doors for people that I know would never be open. So that means, you know, if I have a student coming to me, saying, hey, Juanito, I really want this job at this one place. Can you hook me up? And me

saying, I got you! I'm gonna go and send that email for you. For me it's also telling queer Black people specifically like all of the stuff that I went through and saying, no one told me.

Importance of Giving Back. In learning and experiencing mentorship first-hand, participants have realized the importance of mentorship and have taken it upon themselves to intentionally mentor others. Whether they are students or colleagues, participants shared examples of how they received guidance and decided to take others under their wing and provide opportunities they feel they lacked in their professional trajectory.

James Hughes shared what he looks for in a mentor and how he has used this resource for his own professional development and how it has impacted their own leadership and livelihood.

James Hughes said:

We also need someone that is able to sponsor us in the sense where they're willing to vouch for us, they're willing to take chances on us. I look at one of my sponsors who identifies as a queer woman of color, she has served as a sponsor as well, she has taken me under their wings and said, look James, we believe in you, we're going to write job description for you . . . we believe in you so much we're gonna take a chance on you. She's been transformational in my life and continues to be transformational in my life, she inspires me, empowers me each and every day. Being placed into spaces politically in higher education by sponsors, was a godsend. It helped me quickly advance in my career, and to me that's very different than mentorship.

James Hughes also shared his intentionality of finding mentors with specific titles and who identified as queer people of color to gain trust and learn from their own experiences, saying:

I look for people who, who have vice president titles or who have president titles, people who identify as queer people of color. *And I love to learn their stories, how they have navigated higher education and I tried to take notes. And I think for me, it has been the mentors and sponsors outside of the workplace, particularly queer men of color and queer women of color who have really been able to have the most impact in terms of my livelihood and ability to continue* [emphasis added].

Marco shared how he owes his success to the female mentors, “femtors” as he called them, who have provided him mentorship and opportunities to be in professional spaces. Marco said:

I have mentors, and a bunch of them were femtors. They were females, and they saw . . . the potential and they were able to continue to push an advocate and challenge me to not just accept what you know whatever the status quo was for me to not be afraid to continue to push forward. *And I owe them a debt of gratitude, because if it hadn't been for those femtors I think I would not be where I am today. I think that's what a good mentor/femtor does to really kind of help you talk about those issues and challenge those issues* [emphasis added]. I mean I think all of them played an important role in, in kind of pointing me and guiding me, and then kind of breaking things down for me in a manner that wouldn't necessarily make it so terrifying. I appreciated one female supervisor because I know that was kind of a way for her to also continue to support me. She was the reason why I started my master's program because she was pushing me to do it, she would say, I see so much potential in you I want you to continue to evolve, you can do so many great things in education.

Marco also shared why female mentors have been more welcoming than male colleagues, specifically mentioning the concern of having one gay male colleague approach a heterosexual colleague about mentorship opportunities, saying:

Whereas like with men. You know . . . maybe if I were to not see it differently but years ago, I would think that I'm coming on to them if I asked them for mentorship opportunities? It's like they would think, why was he interested in me? What does he want to know about me or my research or what I do for work? Like I don't want to be misunderstood, thinking that I was hitting on them or coming on to them right. So, I was a little bit more apprehensive because of again and maybe it was me and my mind thinking, why is that guy going to another guy in that way right? Knowing you know that I love guys. I don't want [them] to think that I was coming on to them.

Salvador discussed the benefits of seeking mentors and his experience connecting with a colleague who shares similar intersecting identities. Salvador stated:

I create relationships. One of the other main reasons why I took this job is because my boss who is the vice president of student affairs and identifies as a gay and Latinx. I would think, wouldn't that be great to work with someone like that? Because we understood each other immediately, it's kind of like going to gay Latino men who understands what I've been through. We know each other's lives already you know what people have taken about 10 days to figure out we figure out the first day. In the working relationship because he was on board with all the things that I was talking about. *You know gay men, particularly men seem to understand each other a little more, you know we have very similar upbringing, and that kind of thing. And so, the hallmark of a great mentor, which is the people that I'm talking to now, to elevate and recognize and know*

what your skills are and then offer suggestions on how to leverage that to move forward
[emphasis added].

Juanito compared their role of a mentor to one of a housemother. In their context, a housemother is someone who functions as a support system to their children when competing in ballroom culture as a way of survival and social support for LGBTQ+ youth (Arnold & Bailey, 2009). Juanito shared:

Mentorship for me is really kind of like, especially as a queer Black person, I take relationships very seriously, especially when I see something in someone, I see potential in someone, and I want them to actually win. I genuinely see it, as they are now like my child like it's almost kind of like a house to me. I'm housemother to a lot of people and students [emphasis added]. It's like I said, [I am] very much kind of like housemother, to house daughter, and we saw something in each other, and we're both trying to make it in this world, and we must look out for each other.

Additionally, Juanito, shared how unofficial mentoring occurred through “trauma bonding” experiences with colleagues who shared similar identities. In the example presented next, they shared how they started a faculty affinity group at their campus, and how through that process, they became a center point for colleagues with similar campus concerns who they can turn to for advice and community through their interaction with Juanito. They stated:

I started the LGBTQ Faculty Association at university. A lot of stuff we were doing specifically, there were a lot of White people in the room, but they're also Black and brown people who would sneak in, and you know, kiki (urban dictionary refers to kiki as a social gathering, usually for the purpose of casually “kicking back,” gossiping, and sharing stories, historically connected to LGBTQ communities) and connect with me or

wanted to like have lunch and do stuff, I think a big part of that was also trauma bonding, but I also think that they appreciated having somebody who wasn't afraid to speak up about the same experiences that they were dealing with right. There would be Black and brown people in the room who would be like, oh, my God I'm having the same issue in my department. Oh, my God I'm having the same issue, you know, working with this in particular department.

Juanito later shared how in these spaces, being outwardly queer allowed colleagues to also come out to them and allowed them to be less afraid in public, saying:

When they learned that I was there, and that I was so outwardly queer and so happy about being queer. I think some of them, kind of came into themselves and they kind of . . . nudged me, and said, hey, I'm queer too! And let's be friends. So, I think that that was the big thing, I think what has helped bond when people saw that I wasn't so afraid to be myself out in public.

Whether intentionally seeking mentorship or unprecedented mentoring, participants all shared experiences that demonstrated the importance of seeking guidance and community through mentorship opportunities. Through these experiences, participants created strategies for survival in working in higher education.

Loving Oneself

The final theme that arose from the data was the idea one of the most valuable lessons all participants have learned from looking back at their professional trajectory is their need to find love within themselves and always remain as authentic as they can be. From all the turmoil they have encountered getting to their senior positions, they have all found in their attempt to be true

to themselves, unless they love every aspect of their identity, they will not succeed. They all share their success is no longer about them but about the communities that come after them.

James Hughes started off by sharing growing up, he struggled with loving himself which extended to lacking confidence. He shared how time, and a lot of self-work, has allowed him to get to a point where unless his work is bringing him love and joy, he needs to find a different professional opportunity. He stated:

I struggled a lot growing up with loving myself, it was always easy for me to love others and to show love to others but loving myself was always the challenge so being around so many people in that role, who just exuded such confidence not to say they didn't have challenges, but they exuded such confidence and a sureness of self so for me it was always, how do I get there? *I try to think about how I can show up each day as my authentic self. As I navigate the politics, I've always said the moment that I have to change the essence of who I am I know that this is no longer the right place for me. I am done with modifying who I am to fit a standard to please someone else [emphasis added].*

He later went on to share the importance of finding confidence within himself as a way to remain authentic, saying:

Again, I take it back to, I feel as though that I'm not truly living. *And for me, I've accepted at this point in my life, I deserve, not just I need to, I deserve a life where I'm able to thrive, so every day it's work, and every day, there's highs and lows but I've had to make a lifelong commitment to my own health and well-being. So those are some of the things that I have committed to in a lifelong process or journey [emphasis added].* I think that no matter how many workshops that I attend, no matter how many mentors I have, if I don't believe in myself, if I don't see value in me . . . if I haven't done the work to

develop my own confidence, it's going to be difficult for me to move forward in many ways. And you know what I owe it to myself and others to stand in my truth, and to be authentically me.

What he wears and how he carries himself was how James Hughes felt he was being most authentic, and if people did not accept him, he knew it was time to move on. He explained:

So, now I'm going to wear my all-green suit and my baby blue or highlighter yellow sweater, if I want to. I'm going to speak, the way I want to. And if someone does not like it, I've had to come to recognize that that is their issue. *And I have to show up as myself and if I get myself . . . to a point at an institution where I feel like I can't show up as my authentic self that I'm being disrespected that I'm being devalued, then it's time for me to go. I will make my voice heard and my concerns heard, but if I see that nothing is changing or will not change, then that means that my time there is up* [emphasis added].

Marco spoke about the importance of knowing who they are and where they come from to consider when to find a new professional opportunity. The confidence Marco spoke about was one he shared with students who identify in the LGBTQ+ community to empower them and encourage them to be authentic and taking the time for them to know their "why." He shared:

I think you know you have to be true to yourself first and foremost, you have to make sure that you know where you stand. You know when you're seeking positions like the one that I'm seeking, other opportunities in higher education, you have to have a very strong sense of where you come from, and why you are doing the things that you're doing. And be authentic and just who they are (emphasis added). So that's really what moves me, that's really what motivates me, and again if I have to be the only person in the room who looks like me, because it has to start somewhere.

Marco later shared advise he would give to students, saying:

But I think that would be the advice that I would have to give others, I think, is to be yourself, know your why. Be confident, even if you're not. Like, make sure you know that the imposter syndrome, like, get rid of it, get rid of it, because you know you are there because you've earned your spot there, nobody has given it to you. And don't let anybody tell you otherwise you know it's like we've earned our stripes.

Salvador believed loving himself comes from gaining ambition and drive to survive and in doing so he is paving the way for colleagues who may share similar identities. He shared:

I want to highlight that . . . my successes thus far have been an equal mix of my ambition and my drive to survive but also you know people extending a hand behind me and bring me along the way. And so, I adhere to that same philosophy by trying to pull people up with me. You know . . . it is what it is . . . I guess that's how my identity, my gay and Latinx identities really inform the way that I am because the thing is, most people see my name without knowing who I am. If you look at my resume you already know that I am gay, you know that I am Latinx, you already have these assumptions about me.

Juanito has learned to gain confidence in their accolades and has adapted a survival philosophy where they refuse to let anyone walk over them and question their experiences, which is one reason they left their profession in higher education. They shared:

Everybody that I've worked with at every single place . . . has always made me feel like I was the smartest person in the room. They'll say, well, you're the expert. Oh, you have the degree, girl, whatever you say, girl, I trust you. I know never have I've been questioned or made to feel stupid the way that I did when I worked in higher education. I

was like I don't care what people think about me, especially if they're not paying my bills.

Whether learning to be confident along the way or learning from mentors, participants shared their process in finding their worth in value while embracing all their identities. This lifelong strategy has demonstrated that participants genuinely believed being authentic and true to themselves has supported their professional journey.

Researcher Positionality

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study was personal to me as I identify as a gay, Latino administrator who works at a higher education institution. The research question and subquestions were developed through the literature review and my own experience maneuvering my professional development. My identity as an insider affected the interview and narrative that was created. Keeping a researcher journal during the interview process allowed me to remain critical of what I was hearing during the interview and identify my positionality.

In reviewing the data for themes, the stories I was rereading became personal because I shared remarkably similar experiences as my participants. I remembered personal instances during job interviews where interview committees that were comprised of White, and heterosexual members seemed dismissive of my answers. These experiences while interviewing made me question my abilities and qualifications. Once hired, I felt the negative campus climate as I experienced subtle microaggressions when meeting with academic deans and my contributions were not taken seriously because of the title and credentials I held at the time. These challenges made me question my professional abilities and resulted in me seeking mentorship.

In thinking of my professional growth at my institution, I began seeking support and guidance from colleagues who held higher positions. When considering a mentor, I actively sought other queer people of color because I felt they would be able to closely relate to what I was experiencing and thought they would be able to provide real-life experiences and strategies. Mentorship became intentional and strategic; I was able to find a sponsor who actively provided guidance and support that has allowed me to be where I am today.

During my time working in higher education, I have also learned to be intentional about when and how I spoke out about my sexuality and other intersecting identities for fear of being treated differently. I have considered the risks and potential impacts that would change my professional trajectory if I told someone about my sexuality, and in turn, that could negatively impact my experience. Often, I felt the pressure to wear a suit and tie to be taken seriously. I remember an instance where I met with an academic dean who identified as Latino, and he shared how he felt to be taken seriously, he needs to dress “professionally” by wearing a suit. When I told him I do not feel comfortable wearing a suit, he told me if I did not play the part, I would never be respected for my work. Since then, I have questioned what I wear and still have conflicted feelings when I choose to wear a colorful dress shirt with flowers over a suit and tie. I feel as a gay man, to remain authentic to myself, wearing something that makes me feel proud outweighs the discomfort I feel wearing a suit.

As I have continued to navigate higher education politics, I have learned the importance of growing professionally so I can gain knowledge and experience to one day be a member of a senior leadership team. As I heard participants’ stories and what they have undergone to get to where they are, the most important thing I learned was the importance of being authentic and loving oneself. As a gay, Latino administrator, challenges of impostor syndrome and

microaggressions have prevented me from feeling secure in my role, and often, I find myself questioning my identity. The processes I have undergone to truly find love within myself is one all participants shared as a strategy they have learned and one I hope to continue to use moving forward. In hearing participants' stories, I was able to closely relate and build connections with each of them, see their points of view, and highlight these themes. They all shared appreciation for this study as they felt it was much needed to actively change the landscape for GLBA and other minority administrators.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the findings of this study through testimonios and an intersectionality lens that looked at how participants' intersecting identities shaped their experiences working in higher education. The direct narratives shared in this chapter were intended to provide the reader an understanding of the experiences of gay Latino and gay Black administrators. Throughout the interview process, participants reflected on the stories they shared and how in sharing their narratives they'll give their experiences the opportunity to shed light on what it is like to hold a senior level position as a gay Latino and gay Black administrator.

Throughout this chapter the themes that arose from the data provided examples of the various challenges that GLBA face when applying and accepting a position in higher education. The effects of the campus climate, microaggressions during interviews, and racism and homophobia participants encountered have shaped how they maneuvered these spaces. The data also demonstrated participants' intersecting identities shaped how colleagues treated them, and even in positions of power the negative experiences were prevalent. Due to these experiences, participants developed survival strategies which included seeking mentorship from others who

shared similar identities, and in turn, created communities and support networks of mentees with the hope of improving the campus climate for others.

The questions posed during all interviews were intended to seek narratives and experiences based on their background. The themes that arose from the data demonstrated similarities in experiences and provided much needed information to fill the gap in literature presented in Chapter 2 that currently exists in this population. My intended research question was: How have professional development and mentorship experiences influenced the navigational capital and career advancement of GLBA leading colleges/universities? The data and *testimonios* shared in this chapter outlined the various experiences that have impacted the professional growth of the participants and the ways they have navigated the system of higher education to earn their current senior leader positions. Chapter 5 provides information regarding implications of this research and addresses the limitations of the study and potential next steps.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

I think I've gotten myself to the point in my life where I've realized that if an institution is unable to accept and love me as me as my authentic self and they're unable to embrace that, then that is not the right institution for me.

–James Hughes

Reiterating the Statement of the Problem

In thinking of the inevitable growth and changes across universities; both in size and diversification of the student population, it is imperative for university administrators to consider diversifying their senior leadership team. Gasman et al. (2015) argued, “college and universities will have to become serious about diversifying across the board including senior leadership to meet the needs of their current and future student body” (p. 5). Senior leaders need to consider the systematic and university culture concerns that come with bringing on a diverse leadership team. It is no longer enough to wait for a chief diversity officer or an equity and justice office to provide and lead campus diversity recommendations; senior leaders must consider immediate action to learn and comprehend what is preventing marginalized populations from moving up professionally and what needs to change to support and retain this population.

Reiterating the Significance of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to understand the lived experiences of gay Latino and gay Black higher education administrators in senior leadership positions and attempt to uncover the challenges and strategies they have used to survive and thrive throughout their professional trajectories. By unearthing their testimonios, this study hopes to shed light on the unique experiences gay Latino and gay Black administrators (GLBA) have undergone to

navigate systems of higher education. Through testimonios shared in this study, senior leaders can learn about the challenges this population has faced and begin to dismantle oppressive and systemic barriers that prevent GLBA from living authentically.

The research question was: How have professional development and mentorship experiences influenced the navigational capital and career advancement of gay Latino and gay Black administrators (GLBA) leading colleges or universities? To answer the research question, the research was guided by three subquestions:

1. What perceived challenges (internal or external) do GLBA believe they are facing when they are applying for or accepting a position?
2. Once a GLBA has attained a leadership position, what are the ongoing challenges and strategies he/they implement to confront homophobia and heterosexism?
3. What personal qualities and characteristics limit or create the opportunity for GLBA to become leaders?

Included in this chapter is a summary of the themes that emerged from the findings presented in Chapter 4. In the discussion, an analysis of the ways each theme addressed the overarching research question and subquestions is also included. Finally, implications and recommendations for future research concludes this chapter.

Implications

After a thorough review of the data, and in consideration with the literature review and research questions, the following themes arose from participants' interviews:

- **Microaggressions:** Participants shared examples of microaggressions when applying for positions and while collaborating with colleagues.

- **Campus Climate:** Participants shared the importance of the overall campus climate in deciding when to stay or when to leave a professional position.
- **Homophobia and Racism:** Participants discussed instances of homophobia and racism while working amongst colleagues.
- **Intersecting Identities:** Participants discussed how their intersecting identities as gay men of color played a role in how they maneuvered professional spaces.
- **Intentionality of Dress or Attire and Mannerisms or Tone:** Participants discussed their intention to wear certain clothes and speak or act a certain way to “fit” into heteronormative society.
- **Navigating System of Higher Education:** Participants shared examples they have used to navigate the system of higher education to reach their position of power.
- **Importance of Mentorship:** Participants discussed how mentorship has played an important part of their professional growth and development.
- **Loving Oneself:** Participants discussed identity politics and how they learned the importance of loving themselves.

In the following section, the findings from each research question are considered and presented through the themes.

RQ1. What Perceived Challenges (Internal or External) Do GLBA Believe They Are Facing When They Are Applying for or Accepting a Position?

Microaggressions

In considering the professional trajectory of participants, questions were asked about their experiences in applying for positions and their observations of perceived microaggressions they encountered both during interviews and while collaborating with colleagues. All four participants

shared examples of instances they felt microaggressed or experienced slights against their identities, so they intentionally put forth their identities to preempt any unnecessary comments. Of all four participants, Marco shared he has been applying to positions across the country and anticipates receiving slights about his identities. He mentioned strategizing by being trained to notice microaggressions and responding accordingly, “Because if they were to say something ignorant, I would not have any qualms stopping the conversation and saying hey, let me tell you this is wrong, let me interrupt your privilege right now.” Being gay and Latino offered Marco the opportunity to observe microaggressions and call them out if needed as he understood the importance of interrupting the privileges he observes.

James Hughes also shared how he anticipates encountering microaggressions, so he is intentional about what he wears and how he carries himself during interviews. Specifically, James Hughes shared how for interview committees to focus on his professional experiences and qualities he brings to the position, he has had to be mindful of the type of suit and the amount of jewelry he wears, saying:

I’ve always thought about, do I wear jewelry, or do I wear certain things in interviews?

Will I even get an on-campus interview, or will I get a second interview if I wear certain things, or if I speak in a certain tone of voice.

For James Hughes, deciding to “tone down” his mannerisms and attire is intentional to ensure his interview is focused on the work and not distract committees with his sexuality. Similarly, Salvador mentioned the importance of speaking about his partner during interviews to put his identities in the forefront, and depending on perceived microaggressions, decides if the campus is a right fit. Considering whether to bring up their partner during an interview is a task a gay candidate must contest as it forces them to come out of the closet; it is something a

heterosexual man will never have to consider. For someone like Salvador, this personal fact has been intentional, but for others, it may question whether they feel ready and willing to let the interview committee know about their sexuality.

A unique experience shared by Juanito was their example of being microaggressed by a woman of color who questioned their performance of “being too Black” or “being too queer.” For Juanito, having a supervisor identify as a woman of color may signify an automatic ally who can understand adversity and be cognizant of prejudices. However, in their shared experience, it was made known just because they shared one marginalized identity, it did not leave them free of prejudice.

Based on these findings, it appears for GLBA encountering microaggressions is a common occurrence by heterosexual White and people of color. Having to decide how to be intentional about sharing their identities when considering applying to a new position is taxing, and participants shared being strategic of how to maneuver these barriers has been key in getting to where they are today.

Campus Climate

As shared in Chapter 2, one area under researched is the effects of campus climate on the experiences of LGBTQ+ administrators. Harper and Hurtado (2007, as cited in in Hart & Fellabaum, 2008) stated, “stress that the purpose of conducting and reporting campus climate research should be to serve as a foundation for institutional change” (p. 222). Although rare, research does exist on how LGBTQ+ populations respond to negative campus climates. However, what has been missing are experiences of administrators who hold intersecting, marginalized identities.

Participants in this study shared the added burden they have taken on by not only dealing with toxic work environments but the continual expectation to educate their colleagues on how to improve campus climate concerns not just for the students but also for fellow administrators. In some cases, participants shared the increase in negative campus climate has deterred them from continuing to be employed by a specific institution that does not want to change the campus culture. James Hughes shared how it is not enough to claim “diversity” and send leaders to diversity training and called on administration to change the system.

Furthermore, participants shared as members of the LGBTQ+ community, they are often called upon to respond to campus climate issues regarding LGBTQ+ students and the added burden they take on may be taxing. Marco remembered being asked to respond to the increase in LGBTQ+ student suicides and how he felt obligated to be an available administrator for these types of concerns because the amount of open LGBTQ+ administrators on campus was limited.

One strategy multiple participants shared was the ability to create community spaces or affinity groups at their respective campus that allowed for *trauma bonding*, a space where marginalized communities can come together and openly share concerns and seek advice. Collectively, participants shared to change the campus climate at their campus, they need systematic changes to hold university leaders accountable for contributing to the negative campus climate they have experienced.

RQ2. Once a GLBA Has Attained a Leadership Position, What Are the Ongoing Challenges and Strategies He/They Implement to Confront Homophobia and Heterosexism?

Homophobia and Racism

Like their experiences with campus climate, participants all shared examples where they felt homophobia and racism impacted their professional trajectory. Comments related to their ability to do their work as a Black or gay administrator came into question. For James Hughes, looking around the room and not seeing another person of color or member of the LGBTQ+ community who served in a leadership role signaled to him the undercover racism and homophobia that exists in higher education. He questioned what may be going on when he was the only one around the room with his intersecting identities at an institution that claims to be diverse.

Another challenging example was one by Salvador when he shared that he was called a derogatory term by a White, heterosexual colleague after a private interaction involving a campus wide survey. This instance, along with others, where participants shared their work and credentials have been questioned spoke to the overarching homophobia and racism pervasive at their college campuses. When prompted if they had ever reported discriminatory interactions with colleagues or leaders, they all collectively mentioned the unlikelihood any actual change would occur and instead found other strategies for dealing with these challenges. Juanito shared they were directed to report a homophobic interaction with their supervisor to their Ombudsman only to find out the Ombudsman was a close friend of their supervisor. Participants shared the system has been rigged to keep those in power in charge and opted to seek community and healing in other ways.

Intersecting Identities

Participants' racial identity was often apparent by the way they look. Their other intersecting identities like their sexuality, gender identity, and age were all identities they felt the need to examine depending on their interaction. For example, choosing when to come out to colleagues by either mentioning their partner or dressing in a way that denoted something other than masculine attire was something they all mentioned they have experienced while working in higher education.

As the research demonstrated in Chapter 2, by acknowledging the importance of intersecting identities, educators can see how all identities inform the way administrators view and perform their duties. If universities are gearing to become and respond to more diversity, it is crucial to diversify senior leadership positions where administrators with multiple identities are celebrated. For GLBA, the fact they hold multiple intersecting identities demonstrates their ability to be more critical of how they approach their work. Juanito shared how their intersecting identities are not boxes they can simply turn on and off, saying, "What I think they were trying to insinuate was this notion of like I'm able to put my identities into different boxes, like it's easy just to turn something off, and I was like, well, what do you mean?"

Participants are left to think they may not be valued when they bring their whole self to work and forced to choose which of their identities to put in the forefront and which to keep behind as they maneuver professional spaces. Juanito shared the risk they take when they are forced to make this decision when they stated:

So, I think that for me, what I've been thinking a lot about with asking that particular question, what does it mean to bring your whole self to work, and what risk or what problems or issues come with that and are you comfortable and capable of dealing with it.

The risk Juanito spoke about can be compared to the experiences members of the LGBTQ+ communities undertake when deciding when to come out or when to “perform” their sexuality and culture in the way they act in public or highlight aspects of their intersecting identities.

Intentionality of Dress or Attire and Mannerisms or Tone

Similarly, participants shared the notion of “performing” for their job when considering what to wear and how to act in meetings or during campus events. When participants were asked to describe what they considered typical “professional attire” for men in senior level positions, they all described a suit and tie and anything not resembling this attire was not deemed “professional.” Marco shared the pressure he had felt in dressing in a suit and tie to fit in with White, heterosexual colleagues.

For GLBA, deciding what to wear and how to carry themselves in meetings and campus events has been intentional for survival. As previously discussed, Mobley and Johnson (2019) argued “there are cultural norms present that Black queer individuals often have to contend with due to the way in which their bodies are read and the heteronormative expectations that are placed on them, especially in educational settings” (p. 868). The cultural norms Mobley and Johnson (2019) described was like what Marco indicated has been dictated by the “good old boy network.” Ballenger (2010) described this network as a group of male managers who prefer to hire other men, not welcoming to women, and typically indulging in going out for drinks, golfing, hunting, and fishing. Marco would argue the good old boy network is hyper masculine, White, and heterosexual. For Salvador, wearing a suit and tie is connected to feeling “presentable” and following a “professional code of conduct.”

Two participants, Salvador and Marco, shared they have not given much thought to wearing anything besides a suit and tie because that has been the expectation that has been set for them and they have never felt the need to stray from this norm. Their survival mechanism has been to comply with the norm set forth by the good old boy network to fit in with the status quo.

However, for James Hughes and Juanito, they have both intentionally dressed or held back from expressing their fashionable side of their identity for fear of not being taken seriously, and as a result, have questioned if they are being true to themselves. The mental taxation participants described when they must “play a part” as a senior administrator is one, they all collectively shared, has added additional pressure in maneuvering these spaces. In a way, the deliberate effort to select their attire and choose what mannerisms to show and control directly impacts how they examine their intersecting identities, ultimately, affecting their professional experience as senior level administrators.

RQ3. What Personal Qualities and Characteristics Limit or Create the Opportunity for GLBA to Become Leaders?

Navigating System of Higher Education

Senior administrators have undergone challenges and experiences to successfully navigate the system of higher education to get to where they are now. The strategies they have undertaken have been intentional in keeping them engaged with their work, and in turn, have also determined the limits they will reach when they can safely decide to move on from their current position.

James Hughes described intentionally creating a global network of people who share similar aspirations and identities “psychologically safe.” In his attempt to navigate higher education, James Hughes has worked at surrounding himself with equitable and inclusive people.

Marco also shared his strategy in finding community with people who share his identities to survive and navigate higher education. Through this navigation, Marco shared he has been able to develop a network of professionals who have been supportive of his growth in higher education.

Although having senior level positions provided them each with privileges, they also shared, at the end of the day, they are GLBA entering spaces not built for them. The way they have navigated higher education has been a form of survival. They all shared having a seat at a table comes with privilege. Every day, they are learning what it is like at this table and what strategies they can implement to get more marginalized people a seat at that table.

Importance of Mentorship

While navigating the campus politics to getting to their senior level positions, participants shared the mentoring opportunities they have sought and the importance of paving the way for those following in their steps. Because of their own navigation and trajectory, GLBA have learned the ins and outs of surviving higher education. One strategy they all spoke about was the importance of mentorship. They all defined a mentor as someone who shares knowledge and resources and, ultimately, serves as a support system. Mentorship becomes a strong relationship and bond that uniquely connects them due to their intersecting identities. Beyond that, mentorship and sponsorship has been intentional with the hopes of removing barriers they themselves encountered with the goal of moving marginalized communities up in the professional world.

The “duty” participants felt about paving the way for other people comes from the professional mentorship they themselves have received over the years. James Hughes shared his gratitude for his mentor who has taken a chance on him and credits her for where he is today.

Considering who they mentor, participants shared they gravitate toward mentoring other LGBTQ+ people of color. Although not a requirement, they felt when members of the campus community know who they are and the identities they share, younger professionals seek their support and mentorship as they have lacked their own mentorship growing up. Ultimately, participants shared by mentoring and sponsoring others, they are creating a network of professionals in higher education who will, in turn, mentor others and hopefully increase the number of GLBA at college campuses.

Loving Oneself

Growing up with all their intersecting identities, participants shared their experiences coming out and instances of racism they experienced. For someone that grew up questioning their multiple identities, loving themselves was a challenging task. D'Augelli (1994) described one of the identity processes after coming out is developing a personal lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) identity which includes acceptance of their LGB identity. During this process, a gay person begins acceptance by loving oneself. For the purposes of this study, participants discussed this strategy as one needed to fully survive as they maneuver professional spaces.

Based on the findings of this study, it appears all participants agreed the number one thing they have learned from navigating higher education has been their own process of loving who they are and always striving to be the most authentic they can be. Although they all have gained power in reaching senior level positions, they have not stopped feeling negative experiences like impostor syndrome, microaggressions, and toxic campus culture. Only through self-empowerment and gaining self-worth will GLBA navigate higher education successfully. As Marco mentioned, while they wait for more people that look like them and share other similar identities to join the table, they will be motivated by being the only one at the table, saying, “So

that's really what moves me, that's really what motivates me and again if I have to, you know, be the only person in the room who looks like me, right, because it has to start somewhere.”

Sharing the testimonios in this study can only go so far. University leaders need to be involved in this conversation and look beyond bringing in diverse administrators to lead campus divisions and departments. It is crucial for university leaders to begin the work of dismantling the oppressive structures that continue to push out marginalized communities. Reading these testimonios is the first step in inviting more people to the table and ensuring the table is sustainable and equitable to retain qualified marginalized communities at college campuses.

Recommendations for Higher Education Leaders

As university leaders consider the changing landscape of student demographics and the push for a more diverse community, the diversity of senior leadership teams needs to be considered. It is imperative when recruiting administrators university leaders consider the campus climate and experiences diverse candidates undergo from the moment of interviewing to their retention at universities. As the data shared in this study indicated, GLBA experienced microaggressions, racism, and homophobia while interviewing and throughout their tenure working in senior leadership teams.

Higher education leaders need to actively consider how to allow GLBA to remain authentic and genuinely feel they are seen and valued for all their identities. As the study indicated, GLBA have appreciated mentorship opportunities, so it is recommended universities invest in the continual professional development of GLBA and in continual mentorship opportunities for other higher education professionals.

Lastly, as participants indicated, having to endure challenges throughout their professional experiences may be taxing to the point of leading administrators to leave higher

education. If university leaders plan to identify ways of retaining a diverse and qualified group of administrators, it is recommended they truly consider what it means to be a GLBA and begin to dismantle the oppressive, racist, and homophobic barriers that prevent administrators from succeeding at higher education institutions.

Considering the experiences shared in this study, higher education leaders should consider the following recommendations:

- Mandatory search committee training that includes implicit bias training. A few of the participants shared experiencing microaggressions while interviewing and considered not moving forward in the interview process because of negative interactions with employers.
- Build and strengthen affinity groups/support. Participants shared their need for community support, and a few mentioned creating groups on campus focused on the professional development of marginalized communities. Senior leaders need to demonstrate their commitment by allocating funds and having campus-wide support for affinity groups.
- Institutionalize creating and strengthening queer of color administrative support by identifying succession planning for administrators who identify in one or more marginalized communities.
- Insert and institutionalize equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) as a category in all performance reviews to ensure accountability is measured and tracked for all senior leaders.
- Accountability. Considering the sustainability and retention of gay Latino and Black administrators, senior leaders must consider how to hold the institution accountable

for the lack of diversity in their senior leadership teams and the steps needed to remedy these challenges.

- Addressing the White and heterosexual normality. The data in this study has demonstrated what is most important for participants has been their ability to remain authentic and true to their intersecting identities. Universities need to consider the practices, policies, campus culture, and office politics that continue to perpetuate a White and heterosexual normality that negatively impacts the lives of marginalized communities. Campus leaders need to be prepared to address how these instances continue to push out GLBA from institutions and identify ways to address the continual inequities that perpetuate this norm.

Although not an exhaustive list, these recommendations should be considered as a starting point in addressing the success of gay Latino and Black administrators working at institutions of higher education.

Recommendations for Future Research

This narrative study provided testimonios of four university administrators who shared their experiences in navigating higher education to reach their senior level positions. The purpose of this narrative study was to uncover unique experiences GLBA undergo as they attempt to move up professionally with the goal of identifying the reasons why universities struggle with recruiting and retaining this marginalized population. To really understand this phenomenon, further research can attempt to recruit and interview additional administrators in senior leadership positions across additional campuses. The recruitment of this study featured three individuals who are currently working at an institution of higher education and one individual who has left their profession in higher education. Future research can focus on administrators

who have left higher education entirely to better understand and document their reasons for leaving the field.

To further expand the study, future research can also focus on interviewing participant's mentees who may also meet the research criteria and are in their early professions with the intent of comparing experiences with senior level administrators. Further research questions can unpack how younger professionals who identify as gay Latino and gay Black men seek mentorship and observe trends in those relationships.

Lastly, one participant offered to host a Zoom session with all participants in this study to hear and learn about each other's experiences. Their suggestion came from one of the last interviews where they shared eagerness in learning the outcomes of this study and were curious of the experiences of others in the field. Future research can consider organizing focus groups at large conferences where administrators who identify with multiple marginalized identities can come together to meet and share experiences, ultimately creating a global network of professionals.

Concluding Remarks

Participants in this study shared firsthand experiences that have contributed to their navigation working in higher education. Their testimonios outlined the various barriers they have overcome and strategies they have developed to survive and thrive in their roles. Experiencing microaggressions, racism, homophobia, imposter syndrome, and toxic campus climates have all made them leaders now holding positions of power at their institution. Their strategies of creating a network and building communities have demonstrated their love for themselves and their love for supporting students. University leaders have a duty to maximize the passion GLBA have for this work and work tirelessly to remove oppressive structures impeding the success of

this community. Only in doing so will universities really begin the work of meeting the demands of the changing demographics in higher education.

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APPENDIX A: OUTREACH FLYER

Hello!

WANT TO BE PART OF MY STUDY?

Dear Higher Education colleagues,

My name is Armando Madrid, and I work the University of California, Merced. As part of my dissertation for my Ed.D. program at the University of Illinois, I am conducting research related to learning about the impact that professional advancement and mentorship opportunities have on Gay Latino/Black Academic and Administrative Male Leaders at Hispanic Serving Institutions.

I am currently recruiting participants to be a part of one-on-one interviews. I am seeking participants who:

- Are 18 years of age or older
- Self-identify as gay or bisexual male
- Self-identity as Latino/Black
- Currently work at an institution of higher education that has been designated a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)
- Currently hold a senior leadership position (academic/administrative)

What is involved?

- Participate in three 90-minute one-on-one interviews via Zoom. The three interviews will be held in the span of three weeks
- During the interview questions will be related to participant's professional experiences as they relate to their sexuality and race/ethnicity
- All zoom sessions will be recorded and transcribed
- Confidentiality will be maintained

For more information, please contact Armando Madrid at [REDACTED]@illinois.edu.

*This research is part of an Ed.D. program at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. The principal investigator is Dr. Sharon Lee. She can be reached at (xxx) xxx-xxxx; [REDACTED]@illinois.edu.

APPENDIX B: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



OFFICE OF THE VICE CHANCELLOR FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
805 W. Pennsylvania Ave., MC-095
Urbana, IL 61801-4822

Notice of Approval: New Submission

May 26, 2021

Principal Investigator	Yoon Pak
CC	Armando Madrid
Protocol Title	<i>Toward an Equitable Just Workplace: Professional Advancement and Mentorship Opportunities for Queer Academic and Administrative Male Leaders of Color at Hispanic Serving Institutions</i>
Protocol Number	21804
Funding Source	Unfunded
Review Type	Expedited 6 and 7
Status	Active
Risk Determination	No more than minimal risk
Approval Date	May 26, 2021
Closure Date	May 25, 2026

This letter authorizes the use of human subjects in the above protocol. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved the research study as described.

The Principal Investigator of this study is responsible for:

- Conducting research in a manner consistent with the requirements of the University and federal regulations found at 45 CFR 46.
- Using the approved consent documents, with the footer, from this approved package.
- Requesting approval from the IRB prior to implementing modifications.
- Notifying OPRS of any problems involving human subjects, including unanticipated events, participant complaints, or protocol deviations.
- Notifying OPRS of the completion of the study.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

IORG000014 • FWA #00008584
217.333.2670 • irb@illinois.edu • oprs.research.illinois.edu

APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM



Office for the Protection
of Research Subjects

Consent Form

TOWARD AN EQUITABLE JUST WORKPLACE: PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT AND MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR QUEER ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE MALE LEADERS OF COLOR AT HISPANIC SERVING INSTITUTIONS

You are being asked to participate in a voluntary research study. The purpose of this study is to learn the impact that professional advancement and mentorship opportunities have on Queer Academic and Administrative Male Leaders of color at Hispanic Serving Institutions. Participating in this study will involve three 1-hour one-on-one interviews. Risks related to this research include sharing personal opinions, experiences, and thoughts related to your sexuality and race/ethnicity; benefits related to this research include creating opportunities for younger queer professionals to learn strategies in reaching higher level positions in higher education. The alternative to participating in this study is to refuse participation.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: Dr. Yoon Pak
Department and Institution: Education Policy, Organization and Leadership; University of Illinois
Contact Information: [REDACTED]@illinois.edu

Why am I being asked?

You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about your personal experiences. The purpose of this research is to learn the impact that professional advancement and mentorship opportunities have on Queer Academic and Administrative Male Leaders of color at Hispanic Serving Institutions. You have been asked to participate in this research because you self-identify as gay/bisexual/trans male of color working in a senior level position at an institution of higher education. Approximately 3-4 participants will be involved in this research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

What procedures are involved?

The study procedures are interviews. You will be asked a series of questions related to your personal upbringing, gender identity, race/ethnicity, and experiences working in higher education. You will be allowed to skip questions of you prefer not to answer. All identifiers (i.e. name and institution) will receive pseudonyms to remain anonymous.

OFFICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS	UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, MC-095, Urbana, IL 61801	T 217-333-2670 irb@illinois.edu www.irb.illinois.edu Revised: 02/07/2020

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Institutional Review Board

Approval Date: May 26, 2021
IRB #21804

Consent Form

This research will be performed via Zoom. You will need to attend three 90-minute sessions in the course of three weeks sometime between September 2021-October 2021. All zoom sessions will be recorded and transcribed.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

As a participant sharing personal stories, narratives, and experiences related to their sexuality, race/ethnicity, and experiences at your place of employment may bring up some personal trauma.

Are there benefits to participating in the research?

The major benefit of participating in this research is that in sharing personal experiences maneuvering professional spaces as a queer male of color will support younger professional with similar identities learn from those experiences in hopes to use the same strategies to increase their professional outcomes.

What other options are there?

You have the option to not participate in this study.

Will my study-related information be kept confidential?

We will use all reasonable efforts to keep your personal information confidential, but we cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. When this research is discussed or published, no one will know that you were in the study. But, when required by law or university policy, identifying information (including your signed consent form) may be seen or copied by a) The Institutional Review Board that approves research studies; b) The Office for Protection of Research Subjects and other university departments that oversee human subjects' research; c) University and state auditors responsible for oversight of research.

Will I be reimbursed for any expenses or paid for my participation in this research?

You will not be offered payment for being in this study.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?

If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time. The researchers also have the right to stop your participation in this study without your consent if they believe it is in your best interests and/or you were to object to any future changes that may be made in the study plan.

Will data collected from me be used for any other research?

Your information will not be used or distributed for future use, even if identifiers are removed.

OFFICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS	UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
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University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Institutional Review Board

Approval Date: May 26, 2021
IRB #21804

Consent Form

Who should I contact if I have questions?

Contact the researcher Armando Madrid at [REDACTED] [illinois.edu](mailto:[REDACTED]@illinois.edu) if you have any questions about this study or your part in it, or if you have concerns or complaints about the research.

What resources are available to me as a participant?

- [NAMI: National Alliance of Mental Illness](#)
- [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign COVID-19 Mental Health Resources](#)

What are my rights as a research subject?

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at 217-333-2670 or irb@illinois.edu.

I have read the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date (must be same as subject's)

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

OFFICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS	UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, MC-095, Urbana, IL 61801	T 217-333-2670 irb@illinois.edu www.irb.illinois.edu Revised: 02/07/2020

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Institutional Review Board

Approval Date: May 26, 2021
IRB #21804

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background of Study

Good morning/Good afternoon. Thanks again for taking the time out of your busy schedule to meet with me today. Your input and expertise for this research is valuable, particularly as it relates to understanding the complexities of professional development and mentorship opportunities in the career advancement of queer male administrators of color. My primary focus is to learn more about the professional experiences and mentorship opportunities that have influenced queer male administrators of color in advancing their career to senior leadership positions that are predominantly held by White heterosexual leaders.

Interview Logistics

The interview will consist of three 90-minute sessions in the span of three weeks. In the first, I plan to gather insight to your life experience leading up to your current position, the second we'll focus on details of your professional experience in relation to my research question, and the third will dive deeper in reflection and meaning of your lived experience. The confidentiality of your responses is guaranteed. Your identity, work title, and name of the institution will receive pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Before we move on, is it alright with you if I record this Zoom session for transcription purposes? After I transcribe the interview, the recording will be deleted.

Interview Questions

Interview #1 – Insights and life experience (90-minutes)

- Please introduce yourself, including professional title, institution, and a little bit about your role on campus.
- Please share how you identify specifically as it relates to all your intersecting identities.
- Tell me about your childhood and your experiences growing up with your family
- Growing up, how was your experience in middle/high school?
- Where are you *out* in school? If so, how was your coming out process like?
- Did any of the identities that you hold have anything to do with deciding where you went to school (undergrad/grad)?
- How did your various identities play a role in your experiences in school?
- How would you define a mentor?
- Did you have any close relationships growing up that you considered a mentor? If not, would you want to know what that was like, if they ever wanted a mentor and missed that? What would have made it better if you had a mentor?)
- How did you come to be in your current role on campus?

Interview #2 – Details of professional experience (90-minutes)

- Could you share a little bit about your leadership role on campus?
- Can you describe the campus climate at your current and/or most recent institution as it relates to racism or homophobia?
- Have you experienced instances of homophobia in applying for a new position? If so, please provide examples?
- Have you experienced instances of racism and/or microaggressions in applying for a new position? If so, please provide examples?
- How has your race/ethnicity influenced the type of positions you have applied for and held?
- How has your sexuality influenced the type of positions you have applied for and held?
- How has your race affected your professional opportunities?
- Have you experienced instances of homophobia in your current role? Please describe.
 1. Have you ever reported these instances? (informal/formal)
- Did any of your supervisors identify as queer and/or person of color? If so, did that impact your relationship with them?
- How has your sexuality impacted the professional connections you have made at your campus?
- What strategies can you share about making professional connections on your campus?
- Do you have professional mentors you actively seek in discussion of your professional goals? If so, how has their sexuality influenced your decision to seek out their mentorship? How has their race/ethnicity influenced your decision to seek out their mentorship?
- Advice/recommendations for folks like yourself

Interview #3 – Reflection and meaning (90-minutes)

- Given what you have said about your life before becoming a senior administrator on campus and given what you have said about your work now, how do you understand the ways your sexuality and race/ethnicity have played a role in your professional development?
- Given what you have shared so far, what do you think has made the most impact in your professional growth?
- Thinking about your intersecting identities, what have you learned about yourself while maneuvering various positions in higher education?
- The research I've conducted so far demonstrates that campus climate can severely impact the professional growth of administrators of color, do you find that this is the case in your experience?
- Recommendations for leadership/campus in addressing support for other queer administrators of color
- From what you've shared so far during these interviews, what reflections you've made about your experiences in higher education (do feel safe on your campus? Do you feel supported by colleagues?)
- Given what you have reconstructed in these interviews, where do you see yourself going in the future?

Closing

Thank you again for your time! Like I mentioned before, after transcribing this interview I will be deleting this recording to protect your confidentiality. Do you have any questions for me?