Resisting Intersectional Marginality by Developing a Mestiza Consciousness: Undergraduate Women of Color Challenging and Shaping Power

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by

Stephanie Hernandez Rivera

Dr. Jeni Hart, Dissertation Chair

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

RESISTING INTERSECTIONAL MARGINALITY BY DEVELOPING A MESTIZA CONSCIOUSNESS: UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN OF COLOR CHALLENGING AND SHAPING POWER

presented by Stephanie Hernandez Rivera,

a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dr. Jeni Hart [Chair]

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Dr. Amalia Dache

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Dr. Lisa Dorner

_____

Dr. Cristina Mislán

DEDICATION

Para mi mama, hermanas, abuela's, their mothers, and so on. I'd be nothing without your fe, sacrifice, love, and dream for me.

And to the women who shared themselves with me; thank you for deeming me worthy to hold and share your stories.

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ABSTRACT

This critical qualitative study explores how power shapes the experiences of undergraduate Women of Color engaged in activism and advocacy on social justice issues at the University of Missouri. The development and design of this study is grounded in a Critical Race Feminist (CRF) epistemology. The research questions were: 1) How does power shape the experiences of undergraduate Women of Color engaged in activism and advocacy at the University of Missouri? 2) How do Women of Color experience exclusion in their activist/advocacy work and/or spaces on campus? 3) What strategies do Women of Color employ to resist marginalization on campus – in and outside of activist work?

The research focused on the experiences of five Women of Color undergraduate students at the University of Missouri, four of whom were in their fourth year at the institution and one of whom was a junior. More specifically, there was one Black woman, a Chicana, a mixed-race Mexicana who is also White, and two South Asian Indian women. Through the use of testimonios, pláticas, and sista circles, participants shared their stories and experiences. The identification of these frames and methods is partly a result of my own position as a Boricua, Woman of Color, who seeks to conduct research in a way that is liberatory and reciprocal for participants. The findings of this research were interpreted using intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2019) and Mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa, 1997).

I found four over-arching themes: *Engaging and Adjusting Behavior*, *Culture of Exploitation*, *Distrust Confirmed and Cultivated*, and *Developing a Mestiza Consciousness*. Overall findings demonstrate how participants activism largely came in

the form of creating awareness for others, predominantly White people. In addition, findings showed how those with privilege and power regulate participants' emotions; a lack of intersectional praxis and analysis in all areas of campus life, including equity and diversity work; a performative diversity culture that has not invested in equity and justice; dominant representation reflecting political investments; and how the development of a Mestiza consciousness is used by participants to challenge intersectional marginalization. Finally, this study demonstrates how participants' consciousness and activist work are continuously evolving and how they work to meet their needs and find reciprocity in their activist and advocacy efforts.

Chapter 1:

Introduction

Women of Color have actively contributed to, shaped, participated in and developed movements in higher education that address varying forms of oppression (Beltrán, 2010; Bowker, 1993; Bradley, 2003; Chow, 1987; Hughett, 2010; Noriega, 2015; Springer, 2005). In many regards, this activism has been necessary to challenge White supremacy, patriarchy, and a multitude of other oppressive forces that oppress, marginalize, and exclude Women of Color (Carter-Sowell & Zimmerman, 2015 Chow, 1987; Molina, 2008; Robinson et al., 2013; Verjee, 2012). Working alongside others has been a way for Women of Color to challenge inequity in educational institutions (Beltrán, 2010; Holm, 1984; Hughett, 2010; Manzano, 2018). These joint efforts have also however presented challenges when political agendas are informed and dominated by those with more privilege or visibility (Castagno, 2005; Chu, 1986; Griggs Flemming, 1993; Revilla, 2010; Segura & Pesquera, 1998; Springer, 2005). Women of Color have attempted to build bridges to advance issues of equity and justice (Johnson, 2004; Lenzy, 2019a; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Villenas, 2006). They have also decided on their own terms how they contribute to advancing political agendas of justice and meet their needs in activist efforts (Amin, 2018; Hernandez Rivera, 2020; Hogan, 1981; James et al.; Lenzy, 2019b; Revilla, 2004b). Ultimately, the efforts of Women of Color have been instrumental and undeniable in creating equitable institutions, even when invisible or dismissed.

At a conference in 2011, Loretta Ross explained that the phrase Women of Color emerged largely in 1977. A group of Black women attended the National Women's

Conference and responded to the "Minority Women's Plank", by bringing with them a "Black Women's Agenda." The plank neglected important issues Black women and other Women of Color faced. Other Women of Color wanted to be part of the Black Women's Agenda, which was geared more by racially-marginalized women themselves. When Black women agreed, the agenda needed to be renamed, hence the term Women of Color. As Ross explained, the term was created out of an effort to work in solidarity and was not intended to be a biological designation. It was a "commitment to work in collaboration with other oppressed Women of Color"

and underscore how Women of Color had a shared struggle. Women of Color have historically worked in solidarity with one another (Davis, 1983; SisterSong, 2019; Springer, 2015; INCITE, 2019), with Black women often leading and coordinating these efforts (Louie, 2001; Ross, 2011; Smith, 1989; Springer, 2015).

The confusion around the identification of Women of Color being connected to biology can result in the term being used in an essentialist fashion, which creates invisibility among the various sub-groups represented in Women of Color. All of the groups represented in the term have their own political and social histories and experience forms of oppression distinctly; even within sub-groups there are differences in how oppression is experienced. Sub-group terms like Latinx, Asian, Black, and Indigenous can also be essentializing, as those within each of these communities may experience oppression or understand their identities distinctly and in varied ways. Additionally, the term Women of Color can also inadvertently *other* racially minoritized women because the use of it can result in the word women defaulting to White (Patton et al., 2014). An analysis of race is crucial to and centered in this research; therefore, it is

one of the reasons I use Women of Color. Additionally, my ideology about it aligns with that of Ross (2011); an effort of solidarity that is political and illustrates how power emerges both specifically and thematically in the lives of Women of Color. The women in this research were aware that the phrase Women of Color would be utilized to categorize them. When asked directly about their salient identities, they did not refer to themselves as Women of Color; however, at times, they did refer to themselves as Women of Color during our interactions.

Women of Color are largely an under-researched group across fields and in higher education (Fong, 1997; Medicine, 1988; Molina, 2008). Whether by choice, as a result of pressure, or because of the work of students, faculty and staff, Women of Color have been able to develop their consciousness and explore themselves in institutions of higher learning (Goodstein & Gyant, 1990; Hernandez Rivera, 2020; Kim, 2001; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012). Higher education, however, has also been an oppressive environment where Women of Color have experienced exclusion and marginalization (Molina, 2008; Verjee, 2012; Zinn et al., 1986). Under these conditions, Women of Color undergraduate students have sought to resist, problem-solve, and build solutions in institutions that were not created with them in mind (Hollis, 2019; Lenzy, 2019a; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Revilla, 2004a; Revilla, 2010).

There is little research however, that has examined how undergraduate Women of Color are engaged in activist work (Lenzy, 2019a; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Revilla, 2004b). More specifically, research that directly examines how dynamics of power shape their activist and advocate experiences is practically non-existent. In response, this dissertation explores how power shapes the experiences of Women of Color who are

advancing agendas of equity and justice on one university campus, and the insights to be gleaned and shared from their efforts. This first chapter highlights my position related to this work, the research problem, purpose of the study, research questions, an overview of the theoretical framework, research design, and significance of the study. Finally, this chapter concludes with an outline of what readers can expect in the remaining chapters.

Genealogy of Empowerment

I foreground naming my relationship to this work, as it acknowledges that my interest in this topic, formation of the research questions, and commitment to engage the experiences of Women of Color are based on my own identities and experiences. The Latina Feminist Group (1991) referred to this as a "genealogy of empowerment," which affirms "that we all carry within us the memory of homelands, communities, families, and cultural traditions that situate us in our life trajectories as writers and teachers" (p. 21). With this, there is a necessity to situate the identities, experiences, and the important life moments that have made me who I am and are pertinent to this work.

I am a Boricua, multi-racial woman, born and raised in the United States, specifically in the state of New Jersey. As a young child, I was fascinated by self-advocacy, although I did not know what to call it at the time. In many ways, I believe the tenacious spirit of persistence and advocacy is in my blood. Many of the women in my family experienced personal challenges and struggles at the hands of men they knew in the most intimate of ways. As a child and adolescent, I recall not wanting to "become my mother." I perceived her as putting her own wants and dreams on hold, to appease her first husband, my father—a man who would expect everything of her and who would not deliver on the countless promises he made. I never wanted any relationship with anyone

to come before what I desired and wanted for my own life. I wanted to exist outside of the confines of an intimate relationship, particularly any relationship I might have with a man. I viewed her self-sacrificial behavior through a deficit lens. I realize now, what an honor it is to be like my mother, to possess so much resilience and demonstrate profound persistence. With two children, no college degree or job, she made a way out of no way and she relied on other women to support her in her journey and help her forge her own path. These women became "titi", even when they were not blood related. They too knew struggle and survival and, in this, my mother shared a reciprocal relationship with them and strove to achieve healing and freedom, to be her own woman. The woman who lived beneath the surface, in a patriarchal relationship masked as culture, would find herself and would encourage her two daughters to do the same.

One of the singular representations that I learned about "Latinas" growing up is that they prioritize men and encourage their daughters, nieces, and granddaughters to do the same. This was not my experience with any of the women in my family. They always encouraged me to prioritize myself and an education. My paternal abuelita assisted in raising me and would always tell me that education was important. When discussing men, she would ask "y los novios?", insinuating that I would, and should, have multiple men to pass the time with. My paternal grandmother, in particular, has been instrumental in my development as a young woman. She also participated in the kinds of self-sacrificial behaviors my mother did. Although she did not talk about it much, I recall a time where she told me that she wanted to go to school and was fascinated by bones. She was a certified x-ray technician and wanted to continue to explore this field; however, her life took a different course, as she quickly summarized the story by saying, "pero mi vida

tomó otro rumbo.” She chose to step away from her interest in bones because she was a single mother of four children; she spent the rest of her life committed to her children, her grandchildren, and God. Although I do not remember my great-grandmother, my father and aunts tell me that my grandmother was a lot like her own mother, a loving and selfless woman.

My maternal abuela, who dropped out of high school in grade nine, would also spend her time raising a family and working in factories in both Newark, New Jersey, and Puerto Rico. Soon after her children grew into adolescence, she made the choice to stay home and raise them; she had a husband who had a good-paying job that would allow her the ability to make that decision. Although, he too would engañar. Thus, both sides of my family experienced similar patterns, including the leadership of strong women. I would only see this grandmother on trips to Puerto Rico and she would share similar words of wisdom as my other Abuela on phone calls: “Pa’lante, pa’tras ni pa coger impulse!” She always encouraged me to *move forward*, regardless of the barrier in sight.

My mother would continue to experience challenges in relation to class, gender, ethnic identity, and language, and as her daughter, I remember it vividly. She believed education was a tool to help me avoid some of the same challenges she faced. She wanted the best for my sister and I. She wanted us to achieve more than she did, and she fought to give us all we needed and even what we wanted. As a result, I knew that the only option was to be college-educated. As a teenager, I believed my debt to her would be paid with attaining a college education. As a child and teenager, I tried to do my best in school, although I do not remember being the most book-smart person. I had critical thinking abilities, but school felt like a chore more than anything else.

My first educational exposure to social justice that I can recall was focused on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. I was a student in primary school and was fascinated by the ways he pulled people together to fight toward justice and the liberation of Black people and other communities. Although one of the biggest populations at the school I attended was Latinx, we rarely, if at all, learned about Latinx history. Moreover, learning about Latinas and Women of Color was entirely absent from the curriculum. It was as if who I was did not exist. Outside of the classroom, however, I became educated on issues of racism and sexism through media, such as television and movies. Television shows like *I Love Lucy*, *The Fresh Prince of BelAir,* and *Moesha*, and movies like *Mulan* and *A League of Their Own* were among my favorites. Although they all had problematic elements, I realize looking back that they also challenged the status quo by representing particular communities and identities that did not exist on a wide-scale. Television and movie representation of marginalized communities was minimal, particularly when it came to Puerto Rican women, but it was really all I had.

The first time I read anything by a Puerto Rican woman was during my last year in college; Judith Ortiz Cofer's (1991) *Silent Dancing* in my Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) capstone course. Up until that point, I had not realized that I never read anything written by a Puerto Rican woman. Majoring in Women's and Gender Studies was an accident. I took a class titled, "Equity in Education," because it sounded interesting and aligned with my studies as an education major. I remember feeling validated for the first time by education, as though what I had already felt was backed by knowledge. I learned about research that exposed the reality that boys and girls were treated differently in classroom settings and had different ascribed expectations. It was

also the class where I met my first academic mentor, Dr. Scala, a White woman and lesbian. Soon after, I made Women's and Gender Studies one of my majors.

The first woman whose writing truly reflected who I was, however, was Audre Lorde. I read *Sister Outsider* for a WGS class, and doing so gave me permission to reflect on who I am. Lorde (1984) discussed the interconnectedness of race, gender, sexuality, and class and her words vibrated within me. She shared sentiments that I felt, but did not know how to articulate up until that point. Lorde described a shared struggle among Women of Color in a way that lifted our voices and tied us together. I felt a responsibility to contribute and advocate for myself and other women within that struggle who experienced oppression based on ethnicity, race, class, gender, sexuality, and other identities.

Mentors like Mari Rodriguez continued to cultivate an ability in me that I too could accomplish things I did not even know were possible; si se puede. Mari worked on campus as an administrator; and as a Puerto Rican woman, she shared two of my most salient identities. She was authentically and unapologetically herself and made me feel like I could be *fully* me. It was Mari who co-led a group for Latinas on campus in which I participated. In this group, I felt supported by peers whose identities were not exactly the same, but who had a similar plight. We engaged each other on various topics and wanted to see each other win. Mari was one of the reasons I applied to graduate school to attain a master's degree; the representation of a Puerto Rican woman with an advanced degree signaled to me that this was something I, too, was capable of accomplishing. Against the suggestion of some of the White women faculty in my undergraduate early-childhood education program, who felt that attaining a degree in WGS would be

"outdated," I applied and was accepted into a master's degree program in Women's and Gender Studies.

While attaining my master's degree, I worked at a college where I would meet another mentor, Venus Hewing, a sensational Black woman. After meeting me, Venus quickly introduced me to the idea of working together to support the experiences of Women of Color on campus. I jumped at the chance. We put together a support group-style experience and met weekly for almost 2 years until I left in 2014. The young women in the group also wanted to support the experiences of other Women of Color, so we developed a program working with Women of Color high school students in an inner-city community about 25 minutes from the college. This work was so important to me, that after leaving that institution, I continued working to support the experiences of marginalized communities at the University of Missouri, where I started a position as the Director of the Multicultural Center.

My experience as a practitioner at the university can be summarized with one word: chaos. Shortly after I arrived in the summer of 2014, Michael Brown, a Black teenager, was killed in Ferguson, Missouri, by a White police officer. Black queer women quickly mobilized the campus after that incident. Three women in particular organized demonstrations, but also action planning meetings, to bring the campus together to advocate for multiple marginalized communities. They later worked with leaders of registered student organizations, but more specifically a Black woman, a Black-Puerto Rican woman, and a South Korean woman. They created a coalition and called it exactly that: A Coalition of Student Leaders. They brought forth a "Calls to Action" list to campus leaders that was in the interest of multiple marginalized

communities at the university. These women had a similar vision and mission in mind: to serve their community and advance the plight of the marginalized. They fought tirelessly, experienced threats, and were taxed in ways that was unfair to them as students. Their work both as Women of Color and as a coalition would soon be made invisible and forgotten. Unfortunately, their experiences are not atypical. Historically, the work of Women of Color in movements of equity and justice has been invisible and ignored, advertently and inadvertently, on numerous occasions; or they have been relegated to specific types of work in social movements (Chow, 1992; Davis, 1983; Fujino, 2005; Ross et al., 2016; hooks, 1994; Milkman & Terriquez, 2012; Robnett, 1996; Smith, 2005).

I, and only a few others, would know about what really happened at the University of Missouri and the measures these women took to serve, to use an "ethic of love" (hooks, 1994) in their activism and efforts towards liberation. This ethic of love seeks to challenge systems of domination even when they don't directly impact us, to be of service to others in our activism, and use love as a starting place to do so. I will never forget and will ensure that anytime I spoke of what occurred at the University of Missouri, I would remember Naomi Daughtery, Ashley Bland, Kayland Beck, Jennifer Pagan, LeChae Mottley, and Young Kwon.

In the fall of 2015, campus protests and demonstrations continued, particularly after racist incidents on campus and a lack of inaction on the part of high-ranking campus administrators from the previous year (McElderry & Hernandez Rivera, 2017). The movement was often recognized by the hashtag "#ConcernedStudents1950." Mainstream campus and media narratives erased the work of the women from the previous year,

practically rendering it completely invisible. The movement became largely about one man on a hunger strike and a football team who refused to play in an SEC game if the president of the system did not resign. The president did resign, and although it was a celebratory moment for students who worked tirelessly (many of whom were Black women) to envision change at Mizzou, I understood the moment to be more complex.

The invisibility of the work of Black and Women of Color in the previous and current year not only erased their efforts, it took attention from the inaction of institutional leaders who did not acknowledge their voices enough to act much earlier and until the institution's image and financial position were in jeopardy. It signaled how those who manage institutions maneuver their way through issues of justice with little investment.

The efforts of students did lead to the creation of a Division for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and a Vice Chancellor to oversee that division. Largely the division, however, consisted of consolidating pre-existing roles, work, and offices on campus into one area, rather than investing in a new initiative. Six years later, I have observed little to no change in relation to creating a more equitable and accessible campus. Rather, I have witnessed how marginalized students' realities continue to be ignored. Such was the case when students on campus demanded the removal of the Thomas Jefferson statue on campus (Bacharier, 2020). Jefferson, who owned enslaved Black people and who raped Black women, was commemorated on campus. The statue was placed on the campus in 2001 and was not part of the historical legacy of the institution; however, the student demands to remove it from a central campus location were denied. The president instead suggested that the solution should be to "contextualize" the statue (Bacharier, 2020, para.

10). Additionally, monetary investments were made to protect the statue, which included installing video cameras and an acrylic case worth $20,000 to protect the "original gravestone" of Jefferson, which also sits on campus (Manley, 2020). In June 2021, the university's Board of Curators voted against contextualizing the statue.

During my time at Mizzou, I also served as the Director of the Multicultural Center from 2014-2016, and sought to meet the needs of multiple populations and communities through programming, event coordination, and advisement. For example, one student suggested that a Women of Color retreat be created. I was overjoyed by her idea and supported and collaborated with her to develop the retreat. In addition, we brought together Women of Color of different ethnic identities to participate in the planning process.

My own experiences signal to how I have worked to address, name, and serve the experiences of Women of Color on college campuses. As a Woman of Color, I know what it is to want support, and to want someone to understand. I am forever grateful to have family, mentors, peers, and loved ones who have supported me in the journey toward understanding myself in a way that is transformative and unapologetic. I know it is my life's work to do the same for others. This study is part of this life's work. With that said, I next describe the problem I am attempting to address and the study's purpose.

Research Problem

Although there is research that examines the experiences of Women of Color undergraduate students as individuals (Lenzy, 2019a), sub-populations (Cano & Castillo, 2010; Carr et al., 2003; Cerezo & Chang, 2013; Gloria et al., 2005; Revilla, 2004b; Sue et al., 2009; Waterman & Lindley, 2013), and as a collective group (DeFreece, 1987;

Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014; Goodstein & Gyant, 1990; Hurtado, 1989; Jefferson et al., 2013; Kim, 2001; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Martínez Alemán, 2000; Ong et al., 2018; Vaccaro & Camba-Kelsay, 2016; Verjee, 2013), collectively they remain an under-researched and under-explored population in higher education (Molina, 2008). This is particularly true when examining how Women of Color undergraduates participate in agentic behaviors and acts of resistance that affirm their experience, and challenge subordination in institutions of higher learning (Goodstein & Gyant, 1990; Linder, 2011; Martínez Alemán, 2000; Remedios & Snyder, 2015).

Without an examination of how Women of Color are participating in combatting race, gender, class, sexual, and other forms of oppression, single-representations of them as passive, angry, powerless, and incapable, persist. As Audre Lorde (1984) wrote in her essay, "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism:"

> Women of Color in america have grown up in a symphony of anger, at being silenced, at being unchosen, at knowing that when we survive, it is in spite of a world that takes for granted our lack of humanness, and which hates our very existence outside of its service. And I say *symphony* rather than *cacophony* because we have had to learn to orchestrate those furies so that they do not tear us apart. We have had to learn to move through them and use them for strength and force and insight within our daily lives. Those of us who did not learn this difficult lesson did not survive. And part of my anger is always libation for my fallen sisters. (p. 129)

This excerpt from Lorde's essay underscores Women of Color's oppressed position in U.S. society and how they channel their feelings around their consciousness, towards acts

of resistance to survive in a way that is authentic to who they are, and hence, liberating. Research identifying these actions and the experiences of undergraduate Women of Color who address their needs through the use of various strategies remains underexplored.

This research project is a necessary effort to explore how Women of Color undergraduate students are "orchestrating" their survival, and that of their respective communities. It is both an intellectual and political project, which hopes to work in collaboration with participants to share the knowledge and insights they have gained from their efforts with other Women of Color so that they can do more than survive. Some may find the use of the word "survival" to be extreme, particularly because of the perception of "safety" offered by institutions of higher learning to college students. In response to this, I reflect on a conversation with a student who was describing the act of coordinating an initiative specifically for Women of Color as "a bridge of survival." She explained that events and efforts such as this, bring Women of Color together and "keep people moving. It keeps people surviving day to day," particularly when Women of Color may not feel good about themselves, their identities, their existence, and are not getting the resources and support they need.

Although Women of Color undergraduate students collectively may not directly feel the effects or implications of interlocking systems of domination on their life, they remain at work. This research is not intended to essentialize the experiences of Women of Color undergraduate students. There are surely individuals in this collective group who do not feel impacted by -isms, the necessity to find spaces that speak to their experience, or avenues for collaborative activism. There should be research that examines the

experiences of these Women of Color as well and beyond. This specific study, however, addresses the need to examine Women of Color undergraduate students' activist and advocacy efforts, how they are shaped by power, and how it is connected to their own survival at the University of Missouri.

Purpose of the Study

Women of Color have had to contend with college environments that have been flippant, discriminatory, exclusionary, and dismissive (Comas-Diaz, 1991; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Molina, 2008; Verjee, 2012); thus, examining strategies of how Women of Color challenge these environments is necessary work. Similar to other scholarship, this study emphasizes informing education practice (Linder & Rodriguez, 2012), and in doing this, speaks to practitioners and students who seek to support and build bridges among Women of Color. There are few studies that practitioners and students, who are interested in doing this work, can access to support their efforts towards social change, which is one of the reasons for its execution.

Scholars have addressed what Women of Color gain from friendships with one another (Martínez Alemán, 2000), how Women of Color activists experience marginalization and find "safe spaces" (Linder & Rodriguez, 2012), and the existence of Women of Color initiatives and services (DeFreece, 1987; Nickels & Kowalski-Braun, 2012). However, how undergraduate Women of Color exercise their agency and experience exclusion in their activist work remains underexplored, particularly through the lens of intersectionality. This study attempts to address this gap in scholarship, while also recognizing these stories as ones that have been erased or invisible.

There is no doubt that Women of Color have done important work to advance issues of equity and justice on college campuses. My own experience and the experiences of those with whom I have worked with is a testament to how Women of Color work with those around them who share both similar and different identities. These stories, however, are obscure; such was the case with Black women and Women of Color at the University of Missouri, whose role was essential in what would occur in the fall of 2015 (McElderry & Hernandez Rivera, 2017). That semester, student activism, a hunger strike, and a football team's refusal to play would force the president of the university system to resign. It was the work of Black women the previous year that was instrumental in laying the foundation for these events. Their work was largely overshadowed and became invisible as the mainstream narrative was that a man on a hunger strike and a football team were the reasons for the resignation.

As Rupi Kaur (2015) wrote, "our backs tell stories no books have the spine to carry – women of colour" (p. 171). The story(ies) of Women of Color undergraduate students working with others and each other toward achieving common goals on college campuses is an important story to capture, because it illuminates and recognizes the contributions they make to social justice efforts, specifically at the University of Missouri. It can also potentially provide Women of Color undergraduate students at other institutions visibility in this work, as researchers, practitioners, administrators, and faculty observe the efforts of Women of Color on their own campuses. Research is one tool that can be utilized to understand how, and if, Women of Color are participating in advocacy and activism, the forms it takes, and what it is shaped by. Moreover, the findings from this study and their implications will be useful in the efforts Women of

Color undergraduate students make to challenge institutions of higher learning and acknowledge their well-being in the process.

Finally, it provides an opportunity for practitioners to educate themselves on how they can better support the efforts of Women of Color, both at the University of Missouri and across the country. Readers may find the insights from this study transferrable and these insights may elicit greater understanding about the experiences of Women of Color, particularly for those at historically-exclusive institutions and institutions that are predominantly White, such as at the University of Missouri.

Research Questions

This study investigates how Women of Color, at an institution that is predominantly White and historically built for White men, combat racial and gender oppression, among other forms of domination. Additionally, it examines how power emerges and impacts their activist and advocacy work and why this work is necessary and important to them. The following research questions guide this study:

1) How does power shape the experiences of undergraduate Women of Color engaged in activism and advocacy at the University of Missouri?

2) How do Women of Color experience exclusion in their activist/advocacy work and/or spaces on campus?

3) What strategies do Women of Color employ to resist marginalization on campus – in and outside of activist work?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework utilized in this study is intersectionality. I provide a detailed explanation about intersectionality as a tool of analysis and interpretation in

Chapter 2; however, I will define and briefly summarize it here. Although the idea of intersectionality had been part of political struggle, organizing, and thought before the late 1980s (particularly for those who possessed multiple-marginalized identities) (Combahee River Collective, 1983; Davis, 1983; Collins & Blige, 2016), Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the word and concept in 1989. Crenshaw used intersectionality as a tool to explain legal cases of Black women who had been discriminated against based on interlocking systems of domination, including race, gender, and class. She did this by utilizing an intersection as an analogy for the position of Black women and drawing on the structural implications of how interlocking systems of domination come together to impact the lives of someone who is marginalized in multiple systems (i.e. White supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, etc.).

In providing scholars intersectionality as an analytic tool, Crenshaw brought visibility to the experiences of those who are often invisible because of single-axis analysis (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). This type of analysis relies solely on one oppressive force to examine discrimination and oppression and as a result, creates invisibility around how systems of domination are interconnected and impact those with multiple-marginalized identities simultaneously.

Intersectionality calls for action and creating equitable conditions for those who are impacted by multiple forces (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins & Blige, 2016). This research aims to continue the long tradition of using intersectionality as a tool of analysis to examine the experiences of Women of Color, but also to support the work of Women of Color on college campuses by naming and potentially informing their actions and practice.

Research Design

This study uses a critical qualitative methodology (Denzin, 2015) to examine the experiences and efforts undergraduate Women of Color make towards working with others to address issues of equity and justice at the University of Missouri. A Critical Race Feminist Epistemology (Verjee, 2013) informs the methodology, which challenges ways of doing (Rodriguez & Boahene, 2012) that are eurocentric (Pérez Huber, 2009a) and dominated by men (Sprague, 2009).

The study takes an approach that recognizes the traditions practiced and utilized by Women of Color and People of Color communities (Flores & Garcia, 2009; Pérez Huber, 2009a; Johnson, 2015). Storytelling and sharing have been important for Women of Color as both a social practice and acts of resistance in an effort to preserve the experiences and stories that White supremacist patriarchy have attempted to erase (Johnson-Bailey, 2003; Molina, 2008; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Noriega, 2015; Prieto & Villenas, 2012; Smith, 1989; Thomas, 2005; Vaz, 1997). Therefore, storytelling and experiential knowledge are central to the research design.

However, I refrain from using counter-storytelling, which has been utilized in both Critical Race Theory (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) and Critical Race Feminism (Verjee, 2013) because, although I believe these stories do counter deficit ways of thinking about Women of Color and challenge single-representations, I do not believe it is my responsibility nor the responsibility of Women of Color to "counter" existing ideas about themselves and their experiences. As Love (2004) explained, majoritarian stories are told by those of "dominant" identity groups (although not exclusively) in an effort to maintain their dominant position and reify the subordination of the marginalized, wherein

their subordination becomes solely their fault and responsibility. The work of scholars who utilize storytelling to counter dominant narratives is a necessary act of resistance (Irey, 2013; Quemel, 2014)**.** Within this study, however, I am cautious of using counter-storytelling, because I am not consciously making an effort to counter dominant stories; yet, I recognize that this may occur organically.

A Critical Race Feminist epistemology calls for an inter- and multi-disciplinary approach to examine the experiences of Women of Color (Evans-Winter & Esposito, 2010). Thus, this epistemological stance acknowledges that "stories help us to connect to a world beyond the self. In telling our stories we make connections with other stories" (hooks, 2010b, p. 53). Personal narratives, as identified by Yu (2011), have also been critically used by Women of Color to disrupt erasure in relation to their work in social movements. In an effort to connect to the knowledge and insights in individual stories, as well as make connections across the stories of participants, I utilize multiple methods, that can also be considered methodologies.

In this study, I collected data from approximately five participants who were undergraduate Women of Color at the University of Missouri, a predominantly White and historically man-centered research university in the United States. More specifically, I use testimonios (Flores & Garcia, 2009; Prieto & Villenas, 2012), conduct pláticas (Guajardo & Guajardo, 2008; Flores & Garcia, 2009), and sista circles (Johnson, 2015) to collect stories and experiences. Women of Color scholars have encouraged the use of methods that are appropriate to our experience and, thus, I employ these methods in a collaborative style to honor our own ways of doing and being (Flores & Garcia, 2009; Collins, 2002; Johnson-Bailey, 2003; Rodriguez & Boahene, 2012).

Testimonio, although executed in different ways, generally, is the act of an individual writing or sharing their story and involves overcoming some sort of struggle or challenge. Pláticas can be understood as dialogues in which insights and knowledge can be gained or drawn. It can be somewhat compared to semi-structured interviews; however, pláticas are more conversational and acknowledge the needs of the participant. Johnson (2015) employed the sista circle methodology to empower and engage Black women teachers in sharing their professional experiences in a support group format. Historically, sista circles were rooted in the social, cultural, and activist practices of Black women beginning in the late 1800s (Giddings, 1985; Johnson, 2015). Scholars have also used "sharing circles" with Indigenous peoples (Tachine et al., 2016). Scholars identified these circles as a methodological approach that acknowledges the practices of "Tribal culture" and an opportunity to share stories as a group in a conversational format.

I use Delgado-Bernal's (1998) cultural intuition, which was derived from a Chicana epistemological stance, to guide the analytic process. Cultural intuition occurs when Chicanas, and in this case, other Women of Color scholars, use "personal qualities" and experiences to give data meaning. I utilize open coding (Charmaz, 2006) and multiple iterations of code mapping (Afara, 2008; Saldaña, 2016) to develop categories and eventually themes. I will draw on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) to interpret the findings and understand how racialized, gendered, and other minoritized power dynamics are present within the narratives of participants.

Throughout the methodological process, I kept strategies of trustworthiness foregrounded. As with all studies, demonstrating trustworthiness is

imperative. Introducing my genealogy of empowerment at the beginning of this chapter is part of my trustworthiness approach, as it outlines my positionality and facilitates the process of reflexivity. I will also utilize other strategies in my trustworthiness approach, including triangulation of data sources, prolonged engagement, member checks, thick description, and maintaining a reflexive journal. More detail about the analytic frameworks and tools I utilize are discussed in Chapter 3.

Significance of the Study

Although scholars have studied Women of Color spaces and friendships (Kim, 2001; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Martínez Alemán, 2000; Vaccaro & Camba-Kelsay, 2016), programs (DeFreece, 1987; Nickels & Kowalski-Braun, 2012) and communities (Delgado-Guerrero, Cherniack, & Gloria, 2014; Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Greyerbiehl & Mitchell, 2014), research in this area has been significantly under-explored. Based on the literature that will be presented in Chapter 2, Women of Color have made significant contributions to social movements, both in and outside of higher education (Beltrán, 2010; Bowker, 1993; Brockwell, 2019; Chow, 1987; Chu, 1986; Fuentes, 2013; Fujino, 2005; Garza, 2014; Yee, 1992). They have also experienced and encountered challenges, largely by those who haven't understood them as impacted by multiple oppressive forces (Amin, 2018; Beal, 1970; Blackwell, 2016; Chow, 1992; Cotera, 2018; Lenzy, 2019a; McNair Barnett, 1993; Ross, 2011).

With research in these areas being minimal, particularly in higher education, it is critical to examine the experiences Women of Color are having in contemporary campus activism, particularly as campus activism has increased in recent years (Dache, 2019; Grim, Lee, Museus, Na, & Ting, 2019; Hope et al., 2016; Rhoads, 2016). Without this

examination, the contributions and stories of Women of Color remain invisible, and this invisibility does not provide practitioners, administrators, and faculty with the understanding they need to support the experiences of Women of Color and prevent further marginalization.

Additionally, Women of Color students will not find resources that can support and inform their actions and ideologies when the work simply does not exist. The stories of the participants in this study have the opportunity to create connections with other Women of Color, validate their experiences, and as Audre Lorde (1984) explained, lessons necessary to survive. The implications and insights from this research are centered on the community of focus, which is crucial for scholars who are invested in serving marginalized communities.

What to Expect

This dissertation has five chapters. The first chapter included an introduction, my genealogy of empowerment, research problem, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, research design, and why this research matters. In the second chapter, I review relevant literature about the topic, including more details about the theoretical framework. Although there is minimal research on how Women of Color undergraduate students collaborate with others in higher education, I draw on historical literature that recognizes how Women of Color in varying social movements in and outside of academe have done this work. The literature review provides an understanding of how, why, and under what conditions Women of Color have worked among themselves and those who do not share their identities.

Chapter 3 provides the reader with an extended description of the critical qualitative methodology and methods utilized for this study. I present the findings from the research in the fourth chapter of this dissertation. Finally, a discussion of the findings and their implications for research, policy, and practice can be found in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

Within this literature review I present scholarship about the experiences and legacies of Women of Color doing activist work. I begin this review by presenting the theoretical concepts – intersectionality and Mestiza consciousness—utilized to interpret the findings of this study. I include a historical understanding about how intersectionality has been discussed and enacted since before it was defined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, in addition to how intersectionality has been misused, and its relevance to this work. I also include an understanding of Gloria Anzaldúa's (1997) interpretation and analysis of a Mestiza consciousness. I then move to Women of Color's relationship to feminist, racial equity, and class movements broadly, and how they have worked and collaborated with others in their activism. Next, I review literature about Women of Color's activist work in higher education and how they have found and developed their own community spaces that ground race and gender. Finally, this chapter concludes with a review of the themes that emerged through the scholarship presented.

Writers, theorists and activists such as, bell hooks (1994), Audre Lorde (1984), Angela Davis (Davis & Martinez, 1994), Dolores Huerta (Beltrán, 2010), Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), Barbara Smith (1989), Loretta Ross (2011), Yuri Kochiyama (Fujino, 2005), and more have advocated the necessity of engaging in collaborative efforts in order to advance agendas of justice and dismantle oppressive systems. Women of Color have worked to address issues of injustice in their communities and combat racial, class, gender, and sexual oppression (Davis, 1983; River, 1983; Ross, et. al, 2016). This has occurred with individuals and groups who have not addressed how these -isms impact

Women of Color (Chu, 1986; Basu, 1997; Espinoza, 2001; Facio & Lara, 2014; Lenzy, 2019a), and as a result Women of Color have been silenced, othered, and marginalized in social movements. Both racial and gender equity movements and struggles in the U.S. have, at times, failed to represent the distinct voices and experiences of Women of Color (Loo & Ong, 1982; Chow, 1992; Carranza, n.d.; Yee, 1992). I then use intersectionality in this study as a tool to examine how power and the use of single-axis analysis frames have informed Women of Color's activism and participation in campus equity efforts.

Similar to other studies (e.g., Squire & McCain, 2018), I take an approach to this literature review that recognizes the contributions and voices of Women of Color scholars, activists, and theorists to our own experiences that have been historically and currently silenced and made invisible in the academy. To honor this, I attempt to situate this study in the contributions and experiences of Women of Color and attempt to primarily cite Women of Color in this review of literature (Thompson, 2004). With that said, the literature review provides a deeper understanding of how power dynamics have emerged in the activist work of Women of Color and how Women of Color have resisted against various marginalizing forces.

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

A variety of frameworks have been utilized to understand the experiences of Women of Color in education (Evans-Winter & Esposito, 2010; Jain, 2009; Martínez Alemán, 2000; Park, 2008; Prieto & Villenas, 2012; Robinson et al., 2013; Sue et al., 2009; Verjee, 2013; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). For this project, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide the development and execution of the research are

intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins & Blige, 2016) and Mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa, 1987).

Intersectionality

Harris (1990) explained that scholars have examined women's experiences using a "nuance theory approach" to address essentialism. In this approach, researchers can generalize about all women, as long as they are *sensitive* to differences in identity and experience, with differences conveyed through footnotes and qualifying statements. White women then become the default in the analysis of and discourse about women's issues, while Women of Color are *different*, and as a result, othered. Although there are multiple frameworks that can be utilized, intersectionality recognizes the importance of understanding how power systems interlock to shape the lives of those who have multiple marginalized identities, and challenges the nuance theory approach and essentialism simultaneously (Crenshaw, 2016). "Intersectionality operates as both the observance and analysis of power imbalances, and [is] the tool by which those power imbalances could be eliminated altogether" (Coaston, 2019, para. 46). In this, Women of Color are centered, as opposed to an afterthought.

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), a critical race feminist and legal scholar, originally "coined" intersectionality as a framework. Crenshaw named the concept in the late 1980s when examining the experiences of Black women who were discriminated against. Although Crenshaw (1989) coined intersectionality, it is important to note that Women of Color in the U.S., such as Angela Davis (1981), Audre Lorde (1984), Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) and others have highlighted the oppression Women of Color experience who sit at the intersection of multiple-marginalized identities. In U.S. contexts, Sojourner Truth was

one of the first recorded individuals to articulate what it means to be a Black woman, particularly during early U.S. abolitionist and suffragist movements (Butler, 1997; Yee, 1992). Truth expressed her dissatisfaction about legislation that would grant citizenship and suffrage to Black men, but did not include Black women (Yee, 1992). She also challenged how White women excluded Black women from the suffrage movement. Brittney Cooper (2015) elaborated on this by providing a "genealogy" of intersectionality through the contributions and knowledge of Black women dating back to the late 1800s.

The case at the heart of Crenshaw's (1989) discussion was that of Emma DeGraffenreid, a Black woman, who, along with other Black women, filed a case of discrimination based upon race and gender. Crenshaw reviewed the case, which was dismissed because the court noted that there were both women (white) and Black people (men) who were working at General Motors. The court, however, did not consider why Black men were being hired for positions on the floor, and white women were being hired for secretarial positions. The company believed these roles to be the most appropriate for these two groups, illustrating how the company divided work based on race and gender expectations, leaving Black women no acceptable roles.

Crenshaw (1989) named intersectionality as the reason for the court's inability to understand how DeGraffenreid and other Black women experienced discrimination based on both race and gender, as opposed to one or the other. Through the use of intersectionality, Crenshaw challenged nuance theory approaches to scholarship and examined how DeGraffenreid experienced discrimination at the intersection of race and gender, something that was ignored based on the judge's single-analysis interpretation of discrimination. Crenshaw stated:

> courts seem to think that race discrimination was what happened to all Black people across gender and sex discrimination was what happened to all women, and if that is your framework, of course, what happens to Black women and other Women of Color is going to be difficult to see. (as cited in Coaston, 2019, para. 23)

In her analysis of the case, Crenshaw introduced intersectionality as a theory to demonstrate that the experiences of Women of Color cannot be understood through single-axis frameworks and informs how we participate in advancing social justice issues. Using a single-axis approach analyzes discrimination and subordination as "occurring along a single categorical axis," (e.g., race, gender, ability) (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140).

Intersectionality has been used in academia to name and analyze a variety of issues in a number of disciplines, although not always with its original intention (Collins, 2018; Collins & Blige, 2016). Patricia Hill Collins (2015, June 18) posed the question: "Is intersectionality getting gentrified?" in a talk she delivered and went on to say, "if everything becomes intersectionality, it becomes meaningless." This is evident as scholars have named that an interrogation of power relationships has not always been present in the use of intersectionality (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2002; Coaston, 2019; Collins & Blige, 2016).

Intersectionality is not synonymous with multiple or marginalized identities; it is an analytic sensibility and tool that allows activists and thinkers to understand how communities and people have been neglected and invisible because of interlocking systems of domination (Crenshaw, 1991). As Crenshaw (2016) explained in her TedTalk on "The Urgency of Intersectionality," intersectionality is about the detrimental impact of

multiple forms of oppression that are often invisible without an intersectional framing. In the TedTalk she stated, “So what do you call being impacted by multiple forces, and then abandoned to fend for yourself? Intersectionality seemed to do it for me.” This framing is used by scholars in many disciplines and fields, including education, to better understand the role of power in Women of Color’s collective experiences (e.g., Carter-Sowell & Zimmerman, 2015; Espinosa, 2011; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Ong et al., 2017) and in their experiences within particular subgroups (e.g., Greyerbiehl & Mitchell, 2014; Winkle-Wagner et al., 2019).

Within this study, I focus on the three ways that intersectionality takes form as presented by Crenshaw (1991): structural, political, and representational. Structural intersectionality demonstrates how organizations and institutions create and organize services, policies (formal and informal), practices, and laws that oppress Women of Color at the intersection of marginalized identities. The experience of DeGraffenreid and other Black women at General Motors is one example of this. Political intersectionality occurs when movements working toward justice function in a way that excludes and marginalizes Women of Color. For example, when white women lead feminist organizations and refuse to recognize that class and race are important factors that shape Women of Color’s experiences with oppression (Carranza, n.d.; Davis, 1983; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012). Finally, representational intersectionality refers to how “images are produced through a confluence [of] race and gender, as well as how a recognition of racist and sexist representation marginalize Women of Color” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1283). For instance, representational intersectionality can be identified through the production of particular images and tropes utilized to represent or misrepresent Women of Color

groups. It can also be found in how media outlets privilege the voices and experiences of those with more privilege within marginalized groups, i.e. men or White women (Hightower Langston, 2003; Milkman & Terriquez, 2012). How I use the forms of intersectionality to interpret the findings is further described in Chapter 3.

Mestiza Consciousness

I include Gloria Anzaldúa's (1999) Mestiza consciousness in this section, as it proved to be instrumental in understanding some of the findings in this study. Although I did not go into the study foregrounding this concept, emergent findings led me to incorporate it to better make meaning of them. I provide a brief introduction to the concept here, but describe it in greater detail in Chapter 5. Anzaldúa's foundational text, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, is a semi-autobiographical work in which she explores the axis of multiple dominating forces, and what it means to exist in multiple worlds. Existing herself with multiple identities and in-between worlds, Anzaldúa (1999) captured the challenges of developing consciousness and how often Latinas who struggle with this consciousness are those who are responding to myriad and conflicting needs of different spaces. She used experiential knowledge and observations to illuminate how someone, such as herself, is often displaced in the dominant culture, and also within her own oppressed communities based on race, gender, and sexuality expectations. She underscored this complexity writing:

> Una Lucha de Fronteras/A Struggle of Borders
>
> Because I, a Mestiza,
>
> Continually walk out of one culture
>
> And into another,

> Because I am in all cultures at the same time,
>
> Alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,
>
> Me Zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
>
> Estoy norteada por todas las voces que me hablan
>
> simultaneamente. (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 99)

As a result of domination and duality that create these "cultural choques," she worked to embrace pluralism. In doing this, she challenged colonial constructions and labels placed upon her and began to define herself on her own terms. She embraced herself wholly, taking with her the aspects of all cultures that allowed her to work toward liberation. For Anzaldúa (1999), this occured in the borderlands, places where binary logics can be broken, but also where necessary intellectual and political work can be engaged. She did not cease fighting against the exclusionary ideologies and practices of the multiple worlds in which she exists, nor on behalf of all communities, even those from which she has been excluded.

Although Mestiza means one who is of mixed-race or mixed-blood, the ideological rooting of it acknowledges how Mestizas navigate between conflicting spaces. As Anzaldúa (1999) emphasized, it is important to engage la Mestiza concept interculturally, to understand how Chicanas and Latinas relate to those of other ethnic communities. Collins (2019) poignantly emphasized the connection between intersectionality and Mestiza consciousness, and explained that the "the spatial metaphor of the borderland" identified by Anzaldúa "deepens understandings of intersecting power relations" and social relations (p. 33). In analysis of Pauli Murray's intellectual activist journey and the social contexts, Collins (2019) reflected on how Murray was "always

living in a borderlands space and expressing a Mestiza consciousness long before Gloria Anzaldúa (1999) provided the language to name this space" (p. 202). This consciousness emerged for Murray in how her social contexts and spaces created salience of particular identities because of the exclusion of them or lack of attention to them. Similar to intersectionality, Mestiza consciousness echoes the idea that Women of Color can possess this shared or thematic experience of living on the axis of multiple oppressed identities where expectations are curated differently depending on their social context, and also that experiential knowledge serves as an important contribution to intellectualism. Further, these concepts emphasize how experience in and of itself is a political process of knowledge creation that contributes to collective understanding of how oppression mechanizes itself. The naming of these concepts and constructs has been essential in scholarship; however, Women of Color have lived them before someone was ever able to name them.

Women of Color and Relationships in Activism

The historiography of social movements has silenced the voices of Women of Color, particularly in feminist and racial justice histories (Blackwell 2003, 2016; Breines, 2006; Johnson, 2019; McNair Barnett, 1993). This has often resulted in the perception that Women of Color are apolitical (McNair Barnett, 1993); however, this review of the literature demonstrates otherwise.

Women of Color have been central in moving struggles toward equity forward. Historically, Women of Color have also experienced a variety of challenges in working with others to advance agendas of justice. Women of Color have navigated "oppression olympics" (Smith, 2015; p. 66), which inevitably leads to arguing and dissension about

who experiences more oppression. Some Women of Color have had to navigate how they find their voice and place in movements that place an over-emphasis on a Black and White binary (Castagno, 2005; Chai, 1981).

Smith (2008) emphasized engaging the "whole self" as part of building movements; this has been particularly important for Women of Color who have often felt they could only engage parts of themselves in social movements (Beal, 1970; Lenzy, 2019a). As organizations have often been formed under the framework of a "shared oppression" this approach to organizing can impose challenges when individuals don't engage strategies that combat multiple oppressive forces simultaneously (Smith, 2015). This has been one of the most significant challenges experienced by Women of Color across racial and ethnic identities as single-identity focused groups have not understood the necessity to combat various oppressive systems simultaneously (Chun et al., 2013; Combahee River Collective, 1983; Phillips & Olugbala, 2006; Ross et al., 2016; Smith, 1989; Urrieta, 2004).

Although these organizations have oppressed the experiences of Women of Color and ignored their needs, Women of Color have been able to work collaboratively with both White women and men of Color and developed their own styles and forms of leadership. In these single-axis organizations and movements, Women of Color have been bridge builders and leaders across issues and groups (Johnson, 2004; Lenzy, 2019a; Robnett, 1996; Ross et al.; Villenas et al., 2006). Their roles have been imperative, even when they have not been visible. The next section of this review continues to present the complexity of how Women of Color have collaborated with one another and others in their activist work.

Women of Color and Feminist Movements

White feminist movements have been critiqued by Women of Color because they re-created oppressive conditions based on race and centered the experiences and narratives of White middle-class women. The movement prioritized issues that have silenced or failed to acknowledge differences for Women of Color (Davis, 1983; Lorde, 1984; Parisi & Corntassel, 2007; River, 1983; Ross, et al, 2016; Yamada, 2015). Women of Color's narratives have been instrumental in challenging the homogenization of the feminist movement and recovering the contributions of Women of Color themselves (Yu, 2011), even when silenced in historical work (Pérez, 2016). Moon and Holling (2020) underscored how White feminist movements have excluded Women of Color, and more specifically, how White middle- and upper-class feminists have sought to advance their own political agendas at the detriment of Women of Color. This occurred dating back to the women's suffrage movement, and as recent as the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements.

At the Seneca Falls National Convention in 1851, Sojourner Truth spoke out against the hypocrisy of White men's argument on gender roles (Crenshaw, 1989). White women were reluctant and actively attempted to silence Truth, but inevitably benefited from the argument she presented. The experiences of Women of Color have often been used in this way; they have complicated and demonstrated the falseness in patriarchal ideologies (Davis, 1983). White women have used these stories to advance their own plight, in addition to White supremacist ideologies about Women of Color, but have also refused to engage the ways they silence, oppress, and exclude Women of Color in movements (Davis, 1983; Ross, et. al, 2016). Cargle (2018) specifically points to actions

and behaviors by White women that are "toxic" within feminist movements. These behaviors include: tone policing; spiritual bypassing; developing a White savior complex; and centering White emotion, perspective, and issues. Lorde (1984) articulated very similar sentiments in her essay "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism," written more than 30 years prior to Cargle's work.

Moon and Holling (2020) explained, "[a]lthough (white) feminism treats "women" as a collective when rhetorically beneficial, (white) feminism fails to acknowledge—consistently and in any detail—how the "structural intersectionality" of race and gender position Women of Color historically as sexual victims of white men as well as men of color" (p. 3). This can also be extended to other issues created by systems of oppression and inequity that impact Women of Color differently from White women. This includes reproductive justice (Ross, et al, 2016), economic disparities and labor (Davis, 1991; Nietogomez, 1997; Olivárez, 1997), education (Chow, 1987; Hightower Langston, 2003), and more.

Crenshaw (1989) recognized these aforementioned anti-discrimination movements as "top-down." In this approach, the issues and experiences of those who hold dominant identities within marginalized groups (e.g., white women, men of Color) are centered, which then normalizes how marginalization is understood. Instead, Crenshaw argued for an intersectional analysis and approach that challenges patriarchy "rooted in White experience" (p. 157) and White supremacy. Additionally, Alice Walker's (2009) named and defined womanism as a political identification and undertaking that centers Black womens' racialized and gendered oppression in a way that White feminism had not. The identification could be claimed by Black feminists or

feminists of Color who are “committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health” (p. 45). Chicanas have also identified a Chicana feminism that recognizes the importance of addressing the needs of Chicanas specifically as “women [who] are oppressed as a group and are exploited as part of la Raza people” (NietoGomez, 1997, p. 98). Acknowledging the commitment to entire groups is important here as, at times, Women of Color have opted out of a feminism informed by a “White epistemology” that might emphasize separatism from men. This effectively prioritizes patriarchy as the only system of dominance, where White women can be understood solely as victims, without an analsyis of how they uphold and benefit from White supremacy (Moon & Holling, 2020).

Just as Crenshaw (1991) challenged the essentialization of People of Color, other scholars have also named the dangers of essentializing women when challenging patriarchal power (Carter, 2012; Chow, 1987). Grounding women’s experiences in patriarchy alone homogenizes Women of Color’s realities and creates a single path that all women should follow to navigate and participate in social movements. As Pérez (2016) underscored, “the assumption that there has been no early history of women of color feminisms because organizers or movements have not used the word feminist erases almost every feminist labor organizer, party activist, and community organizer, and, in fact, much of the history of feminism” (p. 24). Dr. Angela Davis (1994) addressed this when she said that ideological unity is “not essential” to coalition work and cautioned requiring anyone to self-identify with particular labels such as feminist and womanist. In Davis’s perspective, coalitions should embrace ideological difference and focus on

projects upon which groups can agree; likewise, other Women of Color have pushed back against the need to self-identify as feminists (Chai 1985; Prindeville & Bretting, 1998).

Indigenous women have also held various ideological perspectives about labeling or claiming a feminist identity, even when their work aligns with feminist ideals (Chrystos, 2015; Prindeville & Bretting, 1998; Smith, 2011). Whereas some Native women proudly claim the feminist label, others have labeled feminism an imperial project that Native women should reject.

The rhetoric around feminism and the "periodization" of the movement has been largely white-washed, with Women of Color only *miraculously* emerging in the third wave and diminishing contributions prior to this (Pérez, 2016; Smith, 2011). Feminism's strong association to Whiteness has led to reluctance among some Women of Color to identify with the word or movement itself (Chai, 1985; Yap, 2008). In addition, White feminist movements and theorizing have often refused to acknowledge that separatism can be difficult for Women of Color, as the men in their communities are also oppressed (Ambler, 1992; Arvin et al., 2013; Mihesuah, 1996; Olivárez, 1997; Prindeville & Bretting, 1998). As Chai (1985) wrote, "For Women of Color, feminism cannot be discussed or practiced without considering the social, economic and cultural conditions of why and how we live." (p. 60).

In many ways, feminist ideals and actions have existed in communities of Color long before feminism was "co-opted" by White women (Smith, 2011; Yu, 2011). For example, Native women actively resisted against colonization and genocide, their erasure in history, violence against their children, and continued settler colonialism (Arvin et al., 2013; Ross et al., 2016). Black women resisted against slavery and the enslavement of

their children (Yee, 1992). These forms of political engagement occurred well before "feminism" was introduced into U.S. society.

The dominant discourse about feminism often failed to recognize or categorize Women of Color's resistance and activism as feminist, although they most certainly are (Pardo, 1998; Pérez, 2016;). The dominant feminist discourse has often left Women of Color and poor, working-class women on the margins of dialogue and action (Chow, 1987; Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1983; Ross et al., 2016). This was demonstrated in the fight for reproductive rights, which became more of a White, middle-class woman's issue, although Women of Color were experiencing reproductive violence (Davis, 1983). At times this violence occurred in order to advance the reproductive rights of White middle-class women.

Although feminism has been an opportunity for Women of Color to engage in social and political activism, predominantly White feminist organizations and spaces have often marginalized Women of Color. The reluctance of White women to own their responsibility in White supremacy has been a major factor in this reality (Lorde, 1984; Moon & Holling, 2020). White feminist movements have been guilty of political intersectionality, as they have organized around issues without considering how Women of Color's needs may be distinct from their own. They have reinforced representational intersectionality when they presented how they experience marginalization as reflective of all women's experiences.

Even with the re-creation of oppression in equity-seeking movements, Women of Color have recognized the importance of building coalitions and collaborating with White women.

For example, national feminist organizations have historically, largely been comprised of White women, such as the National Organization of Women (NOW), the National Women's Political Caucus, and the League of Women Voters (Carranza, n.d.). To push against the structural intersectionality they were experiencing, Women of Color organized within NOW as a caucus, and ensured that it conducted a demographic breakdown of NOW's membership. Although NOW continued to struggle in recruiting Women of Color, Women of Color within the organization organized to ensure their voices were heard. As the example of challenging NOW's membership demonstrated, Women of Color have worked with others regardless of their ideological differences.

Women of Color and Relationship with Racial Equity Movements

Like with the U.S. feminist movements, Women of Color have been silenced and oppressed within racial equity movements. bell hooks (1994) emphasized the importance of practicing an "ethic of love" in order to move away from a "culture of domination" (p. 245). She specifically referenced the Black Power movement of the sixties that upheld patriarchy within the movement, effectively marginalizing women within it. Working from a love ethic asks that we care and invest in the oppression of those who are face other forms of oppression. It is about understanding how we can be of service to other social movements and struggles for liberation. This means leading from a place of love within movements to challenge re-creating hierarchies of power. Nash (2011) also highlighted how Black women's political actions and Black feminism had a "long tradition of love politics" (p. 19). Like hooks, other scholars and activists have challenged a culture of dominance that was shaped by sexist and masculinist biases prioritizing the voices of men in movements (River, 1983; Crenshaw, 1989; Sosa Riddell, 1997). Women

of Color across movements created “formal and informal women’s groups” within a number of race and equity movements to engage in intersectional consciousness raising and practice (Pérez, 2016).

Indigenous women who participated in the “takeover” at Wounded Knee were relegated to menial tasks, while media outlets asked men solely to speak out (Mihesuah, 1996). The media as an institution, has reinforced representational intersectionality when they have privileged the voices of men in social movements and left out the efforts of women. Historiographies about women’s participation in movements has also often prioritized particular narratives, placing men at the center or identifying them as heroes in movements, with only particular women’s narratives and efforts being identified (Schwartz, 2009; Pérez, 2016).

Women of Color being relegated to more “menial” tasks such as at Wounded Knee has been common place. Within Asian American movements, women experienced sexism and were relegated to more “subservient” roles (Chow, 1987). Additionally, “in many places in the Chicano movement, sexism has not been considered a valid issue” (p. 98). Latinas have also been relegated to particular peripheral tasks in movements or work that has been traditionally performed by women, as well as having been silenced by men (Milkman, & Terriquez, 2012; Nietogomez, 1997; Pardo, 1998).

Within all of these movements, women have also experienced name-calling and been referred to as traitors, sell-outs, aggressive, and even lesbians (in derogatory fashion) by the men in their ethnic and racial communities (Beltrán, 2010; Chu, 1986; Griggs Fleming, 1993; Pardo, 1998). In this, men of Color have exerted power over Women of Color and refused to acknowledge how patriarchy is present within racial

equity movements. As political intersectionality illustrates, they have determined the strategies that should be utilized in challenging racism; strategies which have also relegated Women of Color to uphold gendered expectations.

Women of Color as Agents of Change

Sometimes working within existing structures that have historically kept Women of Color out or on the periphery has led them to create social and political organizations and spaces that address their needs. These organizations have often existed in a smaller capacity than "mainstream," largely White organizations (Carranza, n.d.; Davis, 1991), but have also provided them an opportunity to choose "resistance – as location of radical openness and possibility" (hooks, 1989, p. 23) and understanding that even the marginality they experience within movements can lead to spaces to engage with others critically to combat oppressive forces and structures. These spaces can also facilitate or be the result of a growing "Mestiza consciousness" that embraces fullness and plurality, allowing Women of Color to challenge multiple forms of oppression and conflicting and colliding ideologies. In doing this, they have claimed agency and recognized their own collective power in activism (Chu, 1986; Flores & Garcia, 2009; Nelson, 2010; Ng, 2013; Pérez, 1999; River, 1983).

Similar to other groups, Women of Color have come together based on a shared oppression (Smith, 2015). The 1960s and 1970s were eras where the praxis of intersectional work increased through community organizing efforts led by Women of Color groups and organizations (Basu, 1997; Combahee River Collective, 1983; Davis, 1991; Collins & Blige; Nietogomez, 2018; Chow, 1987; Noriega, 2015). Groups such as the Combahee River Collective (1983), the Latina Feminist Group (2001), League of

Mexican American Women (Cotera, 2018), Black Women's United Front (Gonzalez, 1999), the National Black Feminist Organization, National Network of Asian and Pacific women (Chow, 1987), Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (Chun, et al, 2013), and more, have underscored the importance of understanding their particular group as heterogeneous and working to combat multiple oppressions simultaneously. This demonstrates how ethnic and race-gender specific organizations arrive to said space with varying needs and priorities but attempt to employ a practice that examines and combats intersectional-subordination. Additionally, how said spaces develop as a result of being in organizations that don't acknowledge multiple forms of domination, even in spaces intended to examine multiple forms of oppression (Noriega, 2015; Springer, 2005).

Black women understood the power in organizing their own spaces when they established a press devoted to writings and works by Women of Color, titled the "Kitchen Table" (Smith, 1989). Although Black women came together to develop the press, they understood the significance of opening up the press to all Women of Color as an effort of solidarity and access for those who experience oppression based on race, class, gender, sexuality, citizenship, and more. They published the groundbreaking text, *This Bridge Called My Back: Radical Writings by Women of Color* (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981) that inspired future texts such as, *Colonize This!: Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism* (Hernandez et al., 2002). Further, scholarship about undergraduate Women of Color's experiences also explore agentic and, sometimes activist, efforts to create space for themselves. Before exploring this scholarship, I provide a brief introduction to student activism in higher education.

Student Activism in Higher Education

Student activism, protest, and rebellion has been present in U.S. higher education since the establishment of colonial colleges (Burton, 2007; Novak, 1977; Moore, 1976). These efforts by students who had access to higher education at the time – largely White men with social status - lied in expanding/restructuring curriculum, restrictive policies and rules, the need to improve food and lodging, and even attempting to oust university presidents (Moore, 1976; Novak, 1977; Rudolph, 1990). Later in the late 1800s "normal schools" began to be established for White women as teacher training institutions (Solomon, 1985), with White women later being admitted into colleges and universities more generally. Likewise, a minute amount of Black students were occasionally awarded degrees beginning in the 1820s (Ranbom and Lynch, 1988); with Black Colleges and Universities later being established, beginning in 1854 with Lincoln University (previously Ashmun Institute) (Roebuck & Murty, 1993).

At the start of the 1900s student political groups began to emerge and students addressed a number of issues that advanced social change (Altbach, 2018). Students expressed disdain with quality of instruction and in the 1920s and 30s students sought to organize around foreign policy, address civil liberties in and outside of the university setting, examined racial issues and dynamics in institutions, executed anti-military protests, and increase their presence in university governance (Altbach, 2018; Broadhurst, 2018; Broadhurst & Velez, 2019). Student activists have continuously advocated for peace and contested wars abroad (Altbach, 2018); however, this shifted in the 1940s post Pearl Harbor (Broadhurst, 2018). The 40s and 50s were also a period where students were more connected with labor movements (Barlow, 1991). Although

students organized less in the 1950s, the 1940s and 50s were a period where students mobilized around desegregation (Broadhurst, 2018), specifically African American students at Southern colleges (Barlow, 1991).

Institutions such as the University of Missouri, may not have always had formal policies that prevented the enrollment of Black students, but nonetheless when Black students were admitted they were prevented from enrolling or re-directed to Lincoln University, a historically Black university in Missouri. Lloyd Gaines, with the legal support of the NAACP, sued the University of Missouri's registrar in 1936, forcing him to make a decision on Gaines' application into the institution's law school. After being denied admission because he was Black, they sued the institution to gain entry into the law school. Although the Missouri Supreme Court ruled against Gaines in 1937, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in his favor in 1938. The Gaines' case, although under-publicized, was historic in that it forced segregationist states to either provide Black students the same degrees and programs at a Black university, or allow them entry into the white institutions.

The sixties have been widely known and written as one of the most iconic and visible periods of student activism. Students protested the Vietnam war (Altbach, 2018, Barlow, 1991; Nuss, 2003), against sexism (Broadhurst, 2018), racism (Holm, 1984; Muñoz, 1989; Rogers, 2012; Steiner, 1968;), and heterosexism (Broadhurst, 2018), and advocated for more governance and against patronizing and restrictive campus policies (Broadhurst, 2018). Students did this at their local institutions but also established national organizations to address pressing issues.

Students, particularly Black students, were also instrumental in the civil rights movement participating in a number of groups and actions that advocated racial justice in the United States and remaining connected with the Black community outside of the university (Altbach, 2018; Barlow, 1991; Bradley, 2003; Broadhurst & Velez, 2019; Glasker, 2009). Students of Color advocated for a restructuring of curriculum and one in which they were reflected, often leading to the development of programs in Black, American Indian, Asian, Latino, and Ethnic studies programs and courses (Aparicio, 1999; Barlow & Shapiro, 1971; Chu, 1986; de la Torre, 2001; Hu-DeHart, 1993; Muñoz, 1989; Oboler, 1995; Rogers, 2012; Umemoto, 1989).

Students also advocated for the development of spaces that would address their needs; at times these came in the form of Black culture and multicultural centers (Jenkins, 2010; Patton, 2010) or the creation of organizations (Broadhurst & Velez, 2019; Oboler, 1995; Serrano, 1998). Curriculum changes and the recruitment of faculty of color was also paramount in the demands of students in the 60s and 70s (Broadhurst & Velez, 2019; Hu-DeHart, 1993). As a result of student efforts and an increase in students of color on college campuses, colleges and universities began to develop programs and efforts to address and support the needs of students of color (Broadhurst & Velez, 2019). There were divisions among race in student organizing in the 60s and White students more often organized around class than racism; although there were also radicalized white students who were engaged in anti-racist work and African American student movements (Barlow, 1991).

Dress codes and rules specific to women began to be abolished in the 60s (Nuss, 2003) and with women's studies courses beginning to emerge in the 60s and later

departments and programs in the 70s and 80s (Broadhurst & Velez, 2019). The sixties was also a period in which the field of student affairs continued to grow and expand to meet student needs and address a wide variety of student concerns, including conflict resolution and students pushing against the idea of student affairs professionals as authority figures (Nuss, 2003). A strengthening counter-movement that opposed the movements of the 60s and promised a return to order gained steam in the early 70s and largely pushed against student organizing (Barlow, 1991). Although students continued to organize around race, women's rights, and gay rights, student movements had seen a decline. An increase in of courses in disability studies was also seen beginning in the 1970s, in part as a result of the disabled people's movement (Oliver & Barnes, 2010). Additionally, as a result of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Education for All Handicapped Act in 1975, there was a growth of students with learning disabilities entering institutions of higher learning in the 1980s (Cook et al., 2000).

The late 70s and 80s saw a period of students shifting their focus towards global issues such as, the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, divestment movement, ending world hunger, and the US engaging in colonial practices in other countries, particularly in Latina America (Broadhurst, 1998; Broadhurst & Velez, 2019). During this time students also advocated against gender and sexual identity discrimination and have continued to do so (Beemyn, 2003; Broadhurst & Velez, 2019). Student movements have continued to shift, particularly depending on the political-economic context of the time (Barlow, 1991) and focused on a range of issues (Vellela, 1988). College students are also in a transitory period and so student movements have also demonstrated a level of instability in their longevity and organizing around issues (Barlow, 1991).

In contemporary contexts, students continue to remain heavily engaged in mobilizing their campus communities and creating equitable environments. In recent years, student activism has taken a forefront in higher education dialogue as students have demanded that institutions address pressing concerns in relation to racial equity and injustice (Dache et al., 2019). Here at the University of Missouri, national attention was created when a graduate student's hunger strike, an SEC Division 1 football team, and continued student unrest led to the resignation of the system president. Scholarship in the past twenty years has examined the experiences of students who are engaged in activism and advocacy in a variety of areas including combatting racism (Dache, 2019; Grim et al., 2019; Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016; Hope et al., 2016; Lake, 2017; Logan et al., 2017), heterosexism (Cisneros, 2019; Garvey & Drezner, 2019; Renn, 2007), gender discrimination (Garvey & Drezner, 2019; Renn, 2007; Vaccaro, 2009), sexual violence (Linder & Myers, 2018; Linder et al., 2016), capitalism in and outside of the institution (Dache, 2019; McCarthy, 2012), undocumented student rights (Cisneros, 2019; Corrunker, 2012; Gonzales, 2008: Hope et al., 2016), addressing local community issues (Vaccaro, 2009), advocating for fair policies and practices globally (Barnhardt, 2014; Bose, 2008; Wilson & Curnow, 2012), and combatting multiple systems of domination simultaneously (Revilla, 2004b).

The mechanisms students have used to engage in activism currently are also varied. They challenge institutions through coalition building (Quaye, 2007), relationship building (Biddix, 2010), engage social media as a tool of resistance (Cabrera et al., 2017; Linder et al., 2016; Renn, 2007), create spaces of preservation to support their experiences (Revilla, 2004b), collaborate with faculty and administrators (Barlow &

Shapiro, 1971; Kezar, 2010; McElderry & Hernandez Rivera, 2017), protest at the state and national levels (Corrunker, 2012), occupy administrative buildings (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016), and have been criminalized in their activist efforts (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016).

Additionally, the media continues to capture student activist work across the country in divestment from fossil fuels movements (Melia, 2020), racist policies (Geist, 2019), racism and racist policies (Alsharif & Vera, 2019; Hartocollis & Bidgood, 2015; Johnson, 2020), LGBTQ discrimination (Gelman, 2019), divestment from companies complicit in human rights violations against Palestinians (Conley, 2019), campus sexual assault policies (Bauer-Wolf, 2018; Hartocollis, 2019), and a number of other issues. More specifically, Lake (2017) examined students' participation in the Black Lives Matter movement and indicated that Black students generally supported and participated in the movement more than all other race and ethnic groups and women supported and participated more than men. Black women in particular reported higher levels of support and participation than all other groups, including higher levels of participation than Black men. Racial centrality was also a significant contributing factor for all racial minority women, but not racial minority men. This expands on Hope et al.'s (2016) research, which indicated that Black Latino youth's participation in the Black Lives Matter and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals movements, respectively, was connected to youth's previous experiences in political engagement, their backgrounds and "psychosocial factors" (p. 211).

Although there is historical and empirical research in relation to student and youth activism, particularly more recently, the experiences of Women of Color students who

are engaged in resistance efforts is often less visible in empirical research. Their efforts continue to be made invisible even in contemporary contexts, despite their many and varied contributions.

Women of Color: Student Activism in Academia

Women of Color, in the United States and globally, have a long history of political activism that addresses experiences of race, gender, class, sexuality, and more (Basu, 1997; Blackwell, 2003; Chen, 2007; Gonzalez, 2009; Lenzy, 2019a; Montejano, 2012; Ndelu et al., 2017; Chow, 1992; Pardo, 1998; Parisi & Corntassel, 2007; Pérez, 1999; Prindeville & Bretting, 1998). There are few studies that research the experiences of undergraduate Women of Color in higher education in relation to activism.

Linder's (2011) study of Women of Color and feminist activism is an exception. She found that Women of Color are tokenized and asked to speak for their race. At the end of her article she stated,

> My hope is one day the feminist movement will value Women of Color in a way that allows their stories to be heard and shared without the validation of a White woman, but until that happens, I will use my voice to validate and share the experiences of Women of Color. (p. 22)

Linder's assumption that Women of Color are not valued in "feminist" movements is based on the assumption that feminist spaces are solely White spaces, when surely there are feminist spaces where Women of Color work to value themselves. Thus, in this, "the politics of inclusion inevitably presumes that feminism is in fact defined by white women" (Smith, 2008, p. 309), and Women of Color are made to be invisible. This is further reinforced in Linder's assumption that Women of Color's stories need to be

validated by a White woman, such as herself. To be valued; this assumption is patronizing. This is the very act with which Women of Color have expressed frustration as it relates to working with White women (Hightower Langston, 2003). Although I believe it is important for those of the dominant identity group in any movement to be educated about the experiences of those on the margins, validation from the dominant group is not necessary for these stories to be valuable. Rather, these stories are necessary for systems and ideologies of domination to be challenged.

My own duo-ethnographic work alongside McElderry (McElderry & Hernandez Rivera, 2017) underscored how the activist labor of Black women and other Women of Color was made invisible by multiple factors, including an emphasis on the contributions of men. Moreover, Linder and Rodriguez (2012) found that Women of Color activists are often invalidated and minimized, in part because peers are not aware of their privilege. Participants felt invisible, unless they were treated as tokens, asked to speak for an entire community. This study focused recommendations on how practitioners could support Women of Color activists. These recommendations focused on creating "safe space" for Women of Color, opportunities for peers with privilege to interrogate that privilege, and practitioners exploring their own privilege. In that tradition, my research expands on Linder and Rodriguez's (2012) recommendations, providing more specificity in challenging oppressive systems, as well as identifying implications for Women of Color themselves.

To further highlight the activism of Women of Color in U.S. Higher Education, I break up the next part of this review into Women of Color sub-group populations. Although, race and ethnicity are far more complex than the categorization of Women of

Color into umbrella groups affords, I use these groupings because it is how Women of Color's histories have been organized to date. Upon underscoring the work of race and ethnic groups, I then provide a summary of collective themes that emerge in the literature. I begin each subsection with a short overview of activism and review literature most germane to this study. I present thematic elements at the end of the review to assist the reader in understanding what Women of Color have had to contend with and how they have resisted and claimed agency.

Black Women's Activism Within Higher Education

Black women have been actively engaged in struggles to eradicate inequity in the U.S. for centuries (Brewer, 2020). Scholars have acknowledged the influence of Black women's activism, their contributions to theories on activism, and on consciousness development of other racial and ethnic communities (Hightower Langston, 2003; López, 1997; Mihesuah, 1996). Black women have led efforts toward the abolition of slavery (Yee, 1992), the civil rights movement (Lenzy, 2019a; Simien, 2003), gender and racial equity (Hollis, 2019; hooks, 2000; Gonzalez, 1999; Guzman, 2019), labor organizing (Johnson, 2004; Payne, 1989), reproductive justice (Ross, GutiŽrrez, Gerber, & Silliman, 2016; SisterSong, 2019), sexual violence (McGuire, 2010), reforming the legal system (Crenshaw, 1989; McGuire, 2010), educational access (Harrison, 2001; McCluskey, 2014; Yee, 1992), and more. Yee (1992) referred to the abolitionist movement as the "foundation" in which Black women cultivated their activism. Within this movement Black women engaged in "community-building, political organizing, and forging a network of personal and professional friendships with other activists" (p. 2), that informed their contributions to future movements, including education.

"Education was central to the community work of many Black women" (Yee, 1992, p. 62). Black women throughout history have found education to be a space that could simultaneously liberate and oppress them and their communities (Collins, 1998; McCluskey, 2014; Solomon, 1985; Yee, 1992). Education reified dehumanizing images of Black people as inferior and incapable, and erased their contributions from educational curriculum (Collins, 1998). It has also provided a space where Black women could raise their consciousness and political activism (Hughett, 2010; Hollis, 2019; Johnson, 2004; Lenzy, 2019a).

Educational access has been a pivotal issue that Black women have mobilized around (Johnson, 2004; McCluskey, 2014; Solomon, 1985). In the South, Black women established schools to advance their communities and challenge discrimination (McCluskey, 2014) and ensured that children had access to education. Women, such as Carol King, helped children physically get to school (Harrison, 2001). She worked with both Black and White teachers who were committed to the learning and freedom of Black children. Black women have also advocated in the local communities where they teach to protect the rights of teachers and improve children's education (Johnson, 2004).

Moving beyond activist efforts for justice within K-12 schooling, the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were major periods of political activism for college students, including Black women who frequently participated in racial equity movements (Cole & Stewart, 1996). Black women have participated in multiple forms of resistance in higher education, including demonstrations; sit ins; and demanding the establishment of Black studies' programs, student organizations, and programs and services (Bradley, 2003; Griggs Fleming, 1993). Although men have often dominated the civil rights discourse,

women were very much leaders in movements in higher education (Griggs Fleming, 1993; Harrison, 2001; Hughett, 2010). Students mobilized, particularly in the south and faced arrest and violence (Griggs Fleming, 1993; Hughett, 2010). Black women were not exempt to this violence, as White ideals of femininity did not apply to them. Their efforts were tied to leadership within organizations, but they also provided leadership independent of formal organizational spaces and even challenged formal organizations and respectability politics within their activism (Harrison, 2001; Hughett, 2010).

Ideological differences in strategies and tactics was present throughout organizing efforts. Such was the case with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), organized by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., which took a non-violent approach and worked collaboratively with Whites. This varied from the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), founded by Black college students, who would eventually come to question a non-violent approach to organizing.

The SNCC, led by students and young people, was originally developed through the "counsel" of Ella Baker, who was involved in the SCLC (Davis, 1999). Ella Baker, was a fierce activist and a woman who was involved in a variety of Black organizations and assisted the SNCC (Payne, 1989). She also advocated for the young people of SNCC to be independent of other organizations such as the SCLC and provided advice when it appeared the organization could be divided by an investment in different issues. Baker was critical "in creating and shaping a movement organization that set much of the direction and pace of struggle in the early sixties" (Payne, 1989, p. 891). Other Black women were instrumental in the development of SNCC; with Peggy Alexandeer and Diane Nash writing SNCC's bylaws (Hughett, 2010). As the Black Power movement

emerged, the SNCC examined whether a non-violent approach was effective in seeking liberation (Bradley, 2003; Griggs Fleming, 1993).

At the same time, faculty members encouraged students to become politically active, particularly at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Griggs Fleming, 1993) and administrators such as Lucy Diggs Slowe, the Dean of Women at Howard University were instrumental in creating more equitable treatment of Black women students and ensuring they were developed as leaders (Perkins, 1996). This however was not without backlash from men administrators at Howard and alumni from the institution, both men and women. Students often worked at local levels with the community (Bradley, 2003) and nationally (Griggs Fleming, 1993). For example, the Student Afro-American Society at Columbia University protested the institution's desire to build on a park next to a predominantly Black, low-income community in Harlem (Bradley, 2003). These protests engaged the local community, as well as women from Barnard College.

Similar to other movements, misogyny persisted in the organizing efforts of Black students. For example, although the SNCC appeared to be more receptive to women leaders than other movements (Payne, 1989), "male posturing" still occurred and women experienced "overt sexism" (Griggs Fleming, 1993; Springer, 2005). One example of this is when it was recommended by Frances Beal, a member explained that the group should have a caucus to "explore the impact of sexism on the organization's constituency in addition to racism." (Springer, 2005, p. 47). Although the Black Women's Liberation Caucus (BWLC) was established with general support, there were Black men who openly opposed it, explaining that it would divide the race and was a "white woman's thing." Within this context, women were challenged to navigate activist spaces and how to

engage the fullness of who they are. This showed itself more clearly as the BWLC broke away from the SNCC in 1969 to grow and expand its membership, becoming the Black Women's Alliance (Springer, 2005). Additionally, in the 60's, Black undergraduate women, such as those from Fisk University, also experienced backlash for not being respectable from Black women and men of older generations because they were outspoken, participated in sit-in's, and were arrested (Hughett, 2010). At times, it was church leaders who had to present their behavior as respectable in order for it to be more widely accepted (Hughett, 2010).

Ruby Doris Robinson resisted against these ideological roadblocks and interpersonal dynamics by being authentic to her activism, beliefs, and the way she accomplished her work. She was one of few women to be in a high-ranking position within SNCC and was respected among its members (Griggs Fleming, 1993). She was a student at Spelman College, and although women there were taught to be lady-like, colleagues regarded her as being strong, and even aggressive, in her fight towards justice. She was a complex woman who sometimes embraced *traditional* gender roles, while also expressing frustration with those who attempted to limit her based on her identities. Robinson widely discounted the perceptions of how others thought she should act. Some perceived some of her ideologies as participating in race loyalty, but colleagues recounted how she was unapologetic and, explained that "she did things *she* thought were important" (Griggs Fleming, 1993, p. 80). Women, such as Diane Nash, were also instrumental as they advocated for Black communities in and outside of higher education and challenged white community leaders publicly, like the mayor of Nashville, Tennessee (Hughett, 2010).

Although there is a large and long-standing history of Black women's activism in higher education, research specific to Black women's activism and leadership is more sparing (Domingue, 2015; Lenzy, 2019a, 2019b). Fendrich and Smith's (1980) work focused on Black students more largely; however, still demonstrated that "Black women had more radical economic and political attitudes than Black men" (p.17).

Social movements have come with costs to the emotional, mental, and physical well-being of Black women (Griggs Fleming, 1993; Hollis, 2019). Domingue's (2015) research highlighted how Black women students (graduate and undergraduate) experienced oppression through interpersonal interactions in their leadership roles, which often came in the form of microaggressions, experiencing racially-gendered stereotypes and expectations, and being silenced. At times silencing occurred through being treated as invisible; at other times, Black women were dismissed, limiting how they felt could engage.

Black women are forced to contend with stereotypes such as the *strong Black woman*, which can place pressure on Black women to be indestructible (West et al., 2016). Isolation and Black women's strength have become synonymous with being a Black woman on campus and come with emotional costs (Robinson et al., 2013). Robinson et al. (2013) found that participants expressed feelings of being the "only one" or one of the only ones, which meant they were tokenized and felt a responsibility to challenge societal expectations and double standards. Additionally, because they are both hyper visible, which contributes to stereotyping, and invisibility when it comes to recognition or having campus services that support their experience, there can be serious consequences for their mental well-being (Robinson et al., 2013). Some Black women in

Robinson et al.'s study used the concept of strength to "debunk" perceptions of inferiority; however, others talked about the damaging effects of the concept as restricting Black women's ability to show up as their authentic selves.

As in Robinson et al.'s (2013) study, Black women in Winkle-Wagner et al. (2019) research actively resisted stereotypes made against them and challenged dominant discourses. Participants were also able to become involved with community efforts, service, finding support with other Black women, and developing a positive self-image. This is similar to other research where Black women's involvement is connected to their sense of the support they feel on campus (Porter & Dean, 2015). Through challenging this racist-sexist expectations and stereotypes, Black women engage in activism albeit possibly unknowingly.

More formal work on Black women's participation in activism can be found in Lenzy's (2019a) study, which included three college graduates and one graduate student; however, one story in particular stood out. This story highlighted the challenges of connecting a Black and Latina identity, feeling like an outsider in different spaces or having to contend with authenticity politics, navigating assumptions of a monolithic Black identity, and feeling caution in raising issues specific to Black women among Black men. Additionally, she navigated the pressure she felt to support Black men in racial equity efforts, with little acknowledgement from them on how they oppressed women or gender oppression impacted them.

Lenzy's (2019b) also examined the experiences of doctoral students more specifically, most of whom were in the field of education. In her research, she found that Black women centered others in their activism, and spoke up for others who were

marginalized. In doing this, they "regulated themselves to the background" (p. 136). Unfortunately, they also explained that others did not necessarily reciprocate. Lenzy's findings highlighted that self-care and addressing mental health was important for Black women, particularly as they continued to take care of others at the cost of their own well-being.

Black Women Identifying and Developing Space

Black women have found space in higher education that has allowed them to develop their consciousness, make meaning of their identities, and engage in issues specific to their experience (Croom et al., 2017; Lenzy, 2019a; Lenzy, 2019b; Perkins, 1996; Porter & Dean, 2015; Springer, 2005). They have created organizations to self-govern themselves within dorms at HBCU's in the 1930's (Perkins, 1996) and have also developed Sister Circle organizations, identified by Croom et al. (2017) to center race and gender. Black women who participated in a Sister Circle were able to be more fully themselves in these organizations, and find role models and a community of support and understanding (Croom et al., 2017). A desire to find this specific community came, in part, because they felt "isolated" from other Black womyn[1]. This speaks to the intersectional praxis of Black women in institutions of higher learning. Domingue's (2015) research also underscored how women and people of Color-centered networks offered opportunities to encourage Black women's leadership, particularly women-

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[1] Although the authors do not explain the use of the word womyn, it has been utilized to challenge the idea that women are a subset 'of man' (Key, 2017). I use womyn here to be consistent with the authors' language.

centered networks, which “eased feelings of isolation on campus” and supported women in understanding how oppression mechanized itself in their lives (p. 467). These networks can be particularly critical in more homogenous spaces, such as PWIs where Black women’s well-being can be significantly impacted (O’Connor, 2002).

These spaces at colleges and universities are not a recent trend. For example, organizations, such as Barnard Organization of Soul Sisters, existed as spaces where Black women engaged in political activism as early as 1967 (Bradley, 2003) and at Howard University in the 1930s, the Women Students’ League “to develop student leadership” for Black women (Perkins, 1996, p. 93). Black women scholars and artists were also instrumental in developing Black Women’s Studies as a field that would center the experiences of Women of Color, something Women’s Studies and Black studies programs alone did not do (Hull et al., 1993; James et al., 2009). Black Women’s Studies was “enhanced by a younger group of women (and a few progressive men) who were usually students or junior faculty” (James et. al, 2009, xiii).

Lenzy (2019a) found that a Black woman who accessed spaces that spoke directly to her experience provided opportunities for her to engage, discuss, and combat issues of inferiority and isolation. As mentioned earlier, “Sister Circle” organizations have also provided space for Black women to engage these issues (Croom et al., 2017) in a way that single-identity focused spaces and organizations may ignore or discount. Overall, Black women have a long legacy of seeking justice and have carried this into contemporary struggles and activist efforts (Guzman, 2019; Hollis, 2019). They have distinguished themselves as leaders in movements, while simultaneously being criticized

and marginalized in their activism. In many respects, Indigenous women have faced similar challenges in their activism.

Indigenous Women's Activism Within Higher Education

Although Indigenous women's activist and service efforts are rarely discussed in mainstream education (Castagno, 2005), they *have* led organizations and movements to better serve their communities (Barkdull, 2009; Hogan, 1981). Their activism and leadership challenges single-representations of them as victims (Portman & Herring, 2001). Some Indigenous women refer to their leadership as coming from spirituality and cultural traditions (Barkdull, 2009; Lajimodiere, 2011).

As with other Women of Color, part of Native women's efforts has been to challenge power and focus on community-oriented issues (Smith, 2008). Indigenous women have addressed issues including class sovereignty (Smith, 2008), colonization (Hogan, 1981; Smith, 2011), land rights (Smith, 2008), environmentalism (Ross, et. al, 2016), self-determination (Holm, 1984), reproductive justice (Ross et al., 2016), and education.

For Native people, education has served as a tool of oppression, assimilation, and elimination of Native culture (Bowker, 1993; Hightower Langston, 2003), with the government controlling what is taught to Native children and how it is taught, particularly to Native girls and women (Bowker, 1993). Although Indigenous students have a long history of being oppressed through institutions of higher learning, there is little scholarship about Native American women in education (Waterman & Lindley, 2013). What has persisted is deficit ways of thinking about Native culture and practices, with

schools prioritizing White "American" values (Bowker, 1993; Waterman & Lindley, 2013).

Among some of the structural barriers Native women have experienced within postsecondary education are the lack of financial resources (Lajimodiere, 2011), being funneled into vocational schools (Lajimodiere, 2011), racism and racist interactions with professors and peers (Castagno, 2005; Kidwell, 1976; Lajimodiere, 2011), sexism, (Kidwell, 1976; Lajimodiere, 2011), unfriendly and hostile campus environments (Castagno, 2005; Thompson, Johnson-Jennings, & Nitzarim, 2013), and a lack of community on campus (Thompson et al., 2013).

In education, work about Native women serving and advancing their communities has remained largely invisible (Juntunen et al., 2001). Ambler's (1992) article on Native women leaders underscored how women comprised 39% of presents of tribal colleges at that time. Although work in education could be more "expected" of women (p. 10), their leadership was also articulated as an effort of improving conditions for their communities. Despite the experiences of marginalization in institutions of higher learning broadly, among Indigenous women, they have also expressed a love for their experience in higher education (Lajimodiere, 2011). Native women often consider education as strengthening their community and families, as well as an opportunity to give back and be agents of change (Bingham et al., 2014; Thompson et al., 2013; Waterman & Lindley, 2013; White Shield, 2009). This is reflected in how Native women have started their own Indian Alternative Education programs that better serve their communities and challenge the oppression experienced in mainstream education (Hogan, 1981).

Student and youth organizations developed between the 1950s and 1960s; such organizations included the National Indian Youth Council, one of the organizations to participate in fish-ins and that engaged in ideological discussions about U.S. society (Holm, 1984). These organizations were skeptical about university education, believing that engaging in this system would mean they would be part of American culture without fully being accepted. Additionally, they questioned if they would also then become outsiders to their Native cultures. They, along with the American Indian Movement—also a youth-based group, engaged in reform and activism (Steiner, 1968). These groups organized in university settings to develop educational spaces such as seminars and conferences about issues experienced by Indigenous people and also encouraged universities to establish Native Studies programs (Josephy et al., 1999).

Women's efforts were instrumental in organizations and movements such as the occupation of Alcatraz Island and the Fish-in protests, which were a result of fishing restrictions placed on Indigenous peoples (Hightower Langston, 2003). Although men received more media attention in the occupation of Alcatraz, the work of Indigenous women was imperative in "the daily running of the island, including running the community kitchen, school, and health center" (p. 119). Likewise, women were critical actors in the Fish-in protests, arming themselves, just as men in the movement had. They faced physical violence and imprisonment for their involvement (Hightower Langston, 2003). These two examples highlight how Indigenous women have demonstrated commitment to their communities through their activism and service (Barkdull, 2009; McCoy, 1992; Mihesuah, 1996; Parisi & Corntassel, 2007; Mihesuah, 2003). In addition, women activists considered their involvement collaborative (Taylor & Stauss, 2007).

Spirituality has been identified as a source of strength in relation to Indigenous women's' educational persistence, as well as how they understood their role as women in their communities: "keepers of the nation" (Facio & Lara, 2014; White Shield, 2009). However, despite the benefits of being with other Indigenous women, maintaining their communities can be especially difficult when considering postsecondary education (Thompson et al., 2013).

Many institutions across the country have few Indigenous students on their campuses. Yet, Indigenous women students managed to keep community at the center through providing education about Indigenous issues and experiences. Indigenous women have contributed to supporting the educational experiences of those in their community, mobilized within institutions of higher learning, and understood their education as one that can allow them to change and support their communities (Bingham et al., 2014; Hogan, 1981; Thompson et al., 2013). However, not much is known about how power dynamics shape the activist experiences of Native women. As such, I draw on other related research that may provide some insight into potential challenges they face in trying to collaborate with peers.

Indigenous Women Navigating Activism and Solidarity

Native people are diverse and come from a variety of cultural backgrounds, traditions, historical legacies, and practices (Bowker, 1993; Hogan, 1981). Despite this, institutions of higher education often essentialize Native people as one monolithic group. Further complicating potential collaborations and solidarity, research has shown how Black-White binaries silence Native women's experiences and delegitimize them as minoritized people. Whereas White students can perceive Native women as "racialized

others," students of Color might perceive them as "White others" (Castagno, 2005). They also described not being recognized as human, particularly when their cultures are appropriated and they are exoticized (Castagno, 2005).

Indigenous women have felt pressure to be familiar with both their cultural identity and that of the dominant, feeling as though they are "living in two worlds" (Bingham et al., 2014). Native women have been "left out" of race conversations, even in spaces that are intended to serve them. Finally, there are ideologies of "legitimacy" that prevent the engagement or acceptance of Native people, both in and outside of their communities. Perceptions that Native women are not "legitimately" Native based on phenotype, or how they embody and/or practice their culture, can prevent or ostracize their engagement in movements (Castagno, 2005; Hightower Langston, 2003; Lajimodiere, 2011; Mihesuah, 1996). I now move towards Asian women's legacy of activism in higher education.

Asian and Pacific Islander Women's Activism Within Higher Education

The Asian diaspora is far-reaching, including over 40 countries, all with great diversities. Activism within Asian diasporic communities has often been concentrated in particular locals and geographic regions in the U.S., such as the West coast (Lin, 2018). Scholars have noted that Asian American women are largely invisible in their historical contributions to feminist and civil rights struggles, partly because of the small percentage of their population (Chow 1987, 1992) and because "few Asian American women have told their own stories" (Chai, 1985). In her argument for a holistic paradigm for Asian American Women's Studies Chai (1985) identified that this could be the result of a preoccupation with survival, and internalization of not having anything to contribute, and

a complicated relationship with oppression and understanding how they are impacted by oppressive forces. This, along with other contributing oppressive factors are reflective of "testimonial quieting" of the experiences and contributions of Asian women in academia and beyond (Dotson, 2011, p. 242).

As with many other Women of Color communities, radical groups of Asian women have been critical of systems within the United States. For example, Asian Americans have been engaged in addressing a variety of issues including immigration reform (Brackman, 2003; Lowe, 1996; Rim, 2009), racist violence (Kurashige, 2000), racist and xenophobic legislation and policies (Maki et al., 1999), the labor force (Wong, 2000), and race-gender equity in education. Lin's (2018) explored the participation of Asian and Pacific Islander youth participation in youth organizations and how this supported the consciousness and politicization of youth.

Within the context of higher education, API women college students have been actively involved in addressing injustice, although it has not been documented in great detail (Chu, 1986; Chow, 1987). They have also engaged in national and local organizations and networks (Chow, 1987), and have served their own campus communities (Chu, 1986). One example of this has been their advocacy of cultural centers on campus (Umemoto, 1989).

Asian women students were part of launching the first journal focused on Asian Women in 1971 (Chu, 1986; Collins & Blige, 2016), as well as Asian Women's Studies courses. This has been particularly important as even in Women's Studies, the contributions of Asian women have been invisible (Samanta, 2015; Yap, 2008). They supported the development of these courses by sitting on a course curriculum

development committee and participating in the courses themselves. Community and community engagement were central components to the courses developed by Asian women and underscores their commitment to collectiveness. Ironically, the development of these courses were, in part, a response to the sexism that Asian women had experienced in racial justice movements from Asian men (Chu, 1986). This sexism perpetuated political intersectionality as it relegated the issues and experiences of Asian women to the margins and centered men in the process. Asian women have also taken parts in efforts like founding Gidra, a newspaper which was considered the "journalistic arm of the [Asian American] Movement" (Nguyen & Gasman, 2015, p. 340). Although it operated locally, it was later disseminated nationally in colleges and universities.

Recent research found that student organizations, cultural centers, and Asian studies programs provide an opportunity for API students to engage in the development of their consciousness (Manzano, 2018). This is particularly important, as Suyemoto et al.'s (2015) work illuminated how Asian youth who have not had the opportunity to explore racism and grow in consciousness can minimize the racist discrimination and oppression they do experience. This then has inadvertently can impact their mental and emotional well-being as they internalize these hostile and stressful experiences.

Students identified educating the campus community as part of their activism; this included staffing information tables and using social media to create campaigns. They also emphasized the importance of working in "solidarity" with other communities (Manzano, 2018). Similarly, Asian women in higher education reported that their educational experiences have served as a tool of empowerment, particularly when it relates to navigating family expectations (Amin, 2018). Women expressed being "more

confident about their abilities, to make decisions for themselves, in speaking out, and acting as per their choices and values" (Amin, 2018, p. 189).

Asian students must navigate stereotypes of being passive and the model-minority myth that assumes they do not engage in activist efforts (Grim et al., 2019). Participating in activism in a Midwestern context poses other obstacles, as activism is often perceived as occurring solely on the coasts of the country (Grim et al., 2019). Yet, the history of the Asian diaspora in the U.S., particularly as it relates to activism and inequity, is more expansive, despite perceptions and stereotypes.

Lived Experiences of Asian and Pacific Islander Women

Similar to other Women of Color groups, research about the experiences of API women undergraduate students in higher education is limited. However, researchers have found that API women are forced to contend with racialized-gendered microaggressions and stereotypes (Andrews et al., 1999; Sue et al., 2009). As with API women generally in the U.S., API women students are often exoticized and perceived as being passive, meek, pure, and sexually submissive. They also experience being perceived as perpetual foreigners and model minorities (Cress & Ikeda, 2003; Sue et al., 2009).

The model-minority myth has been particularly damaging to API women's mental and emotional well-being, as the myth can create the idea that they do not need mental health services (Cress & Ikeda, 2003). Furthermore, the idea that Asian people are model-minorities, is weaponized[2] against other minoritized groups to argue that other groups should be able to overcome racial barriers through hard work and an adoption of the right

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[2] Use something to attack another person or group. (Cambridge, n.d.).

values (Lee, 2006). It then justifies the oppressive treatment of other minoritized groups as being a result of their own deficiencies and creates potential tensions or barriers to collaboration among communities of color.

Although Asian students can be negatively impacted by the model-minority myth, institutions of higher learning rarely target API students for mental-health services. Moreover, the diversity of this group is often ignored, essentializing the group as outperforming their peers, which is inaccurate especially when data are disaggregated by ethnicity (Chang & Kiang, 2002). Additionally, there has been a lack of consideration of the different needs of ethnic communities in this diaspora in relation to community and minority services (Wang et al., 1992). Research has also shown that Asian women and men have different stances on how supportive the university community is to them, with women finding less support than men (Wang et al, 1992). Similarly, when comparing Asian and Euro-American women's relationships with mentoring, although both groups valued mentor relationships similarly, Asian women students were "less hopeful or satisfied with opportunities to form them" (Liang et al., 2006, p. 150). Even when they were hopeful, difficulties in forming these relationships persisted.

The perception of API students as high achievers and academically successful can also affect how academic support services serve them (Chang & Kiang, 2002). Additionally, research has shown that a negative campus climate (e.g., racist, sexist, xenophobic) can have detrimental effects on Asian students' depression levels. For example, Noh (2007) found that Asian women who were survivors of suicide attempts reported that pressures around the model-minority myth contributed to their mental

illnesses. Research has also underscored how Asian students can feel excluded from conversations and efforts intended to support diversity and equity (Grim et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Asian women can internalize racialized notions of gender that categorize Asian women who exude qualities more aligned with White or "American" conceptions of femininity as "no longer Asian" (Pyke & Johnson, 2003, p. 48). This was reflected in Pyke and Johnson's (2003) research with daughters of Korean and Vietnamese immigrants. The ideas internalized by the women reaffirmed racialized notions that they are submissive and can potentially dissuade Asian women from engaging in political gender equality work for fear of being perceived as wanting to be White. Inevitably this research underscored the shaming of women who did not fulfill Asian femininity, while in mainstream settings participants articulated "a pressure to comply with caricatured notions of Asian femininity, or conversely, to distance one's self from derogatory images of Asian femininity to be accepted" (p. 49). These experiences may make it difficult for API women to collaborate with those within and outside of their identity groups, despite potentially being social justice-minded. Finally, I conclude this section on Women of Color student activism in the academy with how Latinas have mobilized and participated in activism within higher education.

Latina Activism in Higher Education

Latinas have a history of activism within the United States and in institutions of higher learning (Hernandez, 2012; Revilla, 2004b; Villenas et al., 2006; Yosso, 2006). Their activist agendas have ranged to include citizenship rights (Beltrán, 2010), class-based issues (Beltrán, 2010), reproductive justice (Beltrán, 2010; Ross et al., 2016), racist legislation (Mendez & Cabrera, 2015; Jensen, 2013), living conditions (Montejano,

2012), labor rights (Beltrán, 2010; Mariscal, 2005; Marquez & Jennings, 2000), state violence (Oboler, 1995), health care (Enck-Wanzer et al., 2010), worker's rights (Marquez & Jennings, 2000; Rose, 1995), violence (Montejano, 2012), the Vietnam war (Mariscal, 2005), and educational access (Arriola, 1995; Marquez & Jennings, 2000; Yosso, 2006),

The U.S. government, particularly at state levels, has controlled the educational information and access Latinx children have received (Nieto, 2000; Spring, 2013). As with API students, educational institutions have essentialized the experiences of Latinas (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Latinas have faced multiple barriers throughout their education that have ultimately limited access to institutions of higher learning such as: economic (Rodriguez et al., 2000), citizenship status (Beltrán, 2010), curricular (Beltrán, 2010; Enck-Wanzer et al., 2010; Nieto, 2000; Yosso, 2006), school segregation (Arriola, 1995; Maslow, 1961; Nietogomez, 2018; San Miguel & Valencia, 1998; Valencia, 2005), and racism and sexism (Solórzano et al., 2005).

However, unlike the model-minority stereotype experienced by API women, those within educational institutions have often viewed Latinas through a deficit lens. Blaming their inability to attain education at various levels on their culture (Nieto, 2000; Valencia, 2002; Yosso, 2006; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). Research has shown that Latinas accessing education in part, is also related to Latinas' high school experiences, including low teacher expectations (Cavazos & Cavazos, 2010). Therefore, deficit ideologies ingrained in the minds of teachers and school administrators about Latinas can often impede their future academic success. Latinas have been tracked into community colleges and vocational programs (Stern, 1997; Zarate & Burciaga, 2010), without

opportunities to matriculate into 4-year schools (Sólorzano et al., 2005; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). Although retention efforts have been important for Latinas' degree attainment, institutions have not always made efforts to establish these initiatives on campuses. Thus, Latinas have taken this into their own hands, often creating their own retention programs as early as the 1960s, often without institutional support or backing (Sólorzano et al., 2005).

At all levels of education, Latinas have been actively engaged in challenging educational institutions and serving their communities (Cammarota & Romero, 2009; Revilla, 2004b; Urrieta, 2007; Yosso, 2006). Latina mothers have challenged educational institutions by advocating for equitable access and a curriculum that engages the assets of their children (Fuentes, 2013; Nygreen, 2017; Ramirez, 2017; Yosso, 2006). Student activism has also been crucial, and often connected, to the communities in which they live.

The 1960s and 70s consisted of strong political participation of Latinx students (Beltrán, 2010). The Chicano Student Movement in particular was very strong and those within the movement participated in a number of activities including challenging racism in schools with "militant mass demonstrations" and resisting "cultural assimilation" (Pardo, 1998, p. 32). They even challenged the ideologies of elders in the larger Chicano Movement and pushed back against the Catholic Church's and system of education's marginalization of Mexican American people. This movement also consisted of high school students with mass demonstrations like the walk outs at Eastside High School in Los Angeles. Women were active participants in all aspects of movement with men holding more "top leadership positions."

This was the case in a variety of organizations including The Chicano college-student group, the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanos de Aztlán, and the Brown Berets. Women in all groups described sexism from men which included their participation being "limited," relegated to women's traditional roles like cooking and cleaning (Pardo, 1998, p. 33). They expressed "resentment" in these instances and at times when they would challenge sexism, they would be labeled as "women's libbers and lesbians" in a way that sought to degrade them (p. 32-33). Although women often continued to work alongside men, they also began to form their own Chicana movements. Sosa Riddell (1997) also highlights this in her reflection on "Chicanas and El Movimiento," when she explains that at the Denver Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in 1969, women were told their role was to "Stand behind her man" (p. 93).

For example, in New York, the youth-led Young Lords Party was a proponent of "return[ing] the educational system to the people" (Enck-Wanzer et al., 2010, p. 128). They were adamant that schools were being used as a way to indoctrinate children to assimilate into a racist, classist, sexist, oppressive society. Another example of student activism was the first National Puerto Rican Student Conference, which was held in 1970 at Columbia University in New York (Enck-Wanzer et al., 2010). The conference served as an opportunity to organize and learn. In addition to these organizing efforts, students also engaged in Puerto Rican Student Unions (Enck-Wanzer et al., 2010).

Research has also underscored how Latinas have participated in activism as an effort to serve and advance their ethnic communities. A research study about Mexican American alumnae who were politically active in Latinx issues as undergraduates, identified the many ways they mobilized (Hernandez, 2012). They expressed feeling a

responsibility to their communities and how they have continued to carry this responsibility and consciousness with them.

College Latinas leadership has been paramount in movements such as the Los Angeles School Blowouts, where participants recounted their occupation in a number of formal and informal positions and (Delgado Bernal, 1998a) and the Immigrant Rights Movement (DeAngelo & Steleton, 2016; Milkman & Terriquez, 2012). Milkman and Terriquez (2012) explained that college Latinas have used the "legacy of Chicana or other Latin American feminisms" learned from their participation in organizations on campus and ethnic studies classes (p. 742). Participation in Latinx groups and organization has also been found in other research on Latinas experiences with activism, as a space where they were politicized and expected to engage in political activism from peers (Hernandez, 2012). The leadership of Latinas is not always present in the mainstream discourse as media outlets have sought the insights of men in interviews, making them representatives of their community (Milkman & Terriquez, 2012). Overall however, the participation of Latinas in social movements underscores their leadership in demanding rights, advocating for policy changes, and striving to be of service to their communities.

Latinas Creating Space

Chicanas and Latinas participated in the Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán (MECHA). This organization was an important part of student movements. As with organizations like SNCC and SCLC, women faced challenges from men leaders. As a result, Chicanas developed their own organizations that would cultivate a Chicana

feminist movement. Chicanas then created spaces as a result of men-dominated ethnic groups, but also white feminist movements (Segura & Pesquera, 1998).

Latinas have also found and created space in higher education through organizations that speak directly to their experience. Revilla's (2004a) study on a Raza Womyn group emphasized how Latinas find "safe space" to engage issues specific to them and other Women of Color. In these spaces, women were able to develop their consciousness, while also critiquing other supposedly conscious spaces. Again, we see how Latinas understand their identities to be interconnected and how this has been dismissed in single-identity focused movements and spaces. They described the hostility they felt in White feminist circles, how even men of Color who were thought to be conscious still perpetuated sexism, and how even Latinx queer spaces were not as comfortable as ones focused on women (Revilla, 2004b; Revilla, 2010). In this organization, women were able to explore how their identities informed a distinct consciousness. As Revilla (2004a) wrote, "it has been argued that consciousness is the first step toward a commitment to creating change or social and self-transformation for the oppressed" (p. 162). The consciousness that the women developed allowed them to coordinate efforts such as a Chicana/Latina Conference to address salient issues.

Similarly, groups that actively seek to support the experiences of Latinas are acts of resistance in a culture and society that has stifled their potential, development, and sense of self. At the University of Utah Latina faculty created a group for Latinas at all levels (Flores & Garcia, 2009). Participants of the group discuss their stories and experiences openly, share in a supportive community, and even process "wounds" that

they knew would be validated and not judged or criticized by those who would not understand (p. 159).

Latina undergraduates have also supported the success of other Latinas by engaging in mentorship programs that support Latina high school students (Kaplan, Turner, Piotrkowski & Silber, 2009). Specifically, in the Club Amigas mentorship program, Latina mentors engaged with mentees about what it meant to grow up in the United States and discussed stereotypes about Latinas. These spaces themselves serve as support and potential resistance to dominant cultures and ideologies. The next section reviews literature that focuses on coalition and community building across subgroups.

Women of Color Space and Community Within Higher Education

In this section, I focus on how undergraduate Women of Color have both created space and found support and community in higher education. Although not formally understood as activism or coalition-building, I argue that Women of Color coming together in an effort to serve themselves can be understood as coalition-building. There has been some research on the development of spaces, services, and how Women of Color find community in higher education (DeFreece, 1987; Dickey, 1996; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Martinez Alemán, 2000; Nickels & Kowalski-Braun, 2012). There are also personal accounts of these efforts historically, such as the Third World Women's Alliance in which undergraduate women students participated in (Louie, 2001). By creating these spaces, Women of Color often challenge larger systems and the experiences they have of tokenization and marginalization (Kim, 2001; Nickels & Kowalski-Braun, 2012; Ong et al., 2017). Spaces specific to Women of Color, both informal and formal, have helped Women of Color engage in topics and issues of

importance to them and to develop their consciousness (Chai, 1985; DeFreece, 1987; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Martinez Alemán, 2000; Chow, 1992; Vaccaro & Camba-Kelsay, 2016).

Having spaces where Women of Color do not have to explain their experiences has been vital (Linder & Rodriguez, 2012). These spaces help to build community with other Women of Color who were conscious of social justice issues, and allowed them to be their "whole" selves, as opposed to fragmenting their gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and other important identities. Similar to Linder and Rodriguez's (2012) study, Martínez Alemán (2000) also highlighted the challenges that Women of Color experience in being able to process and discuss their most salient identities. The friendships they developed with other Women of Color provided them the community and support they needed, while simultaneously having a space to engage in knowledge sharing among themselves, as opposed to feeling as though they had to educate others. The participants in Linder and Rodriguez's (2012) did indicate, however, that a space for those with similar ideologies and worldviews would suffice, with less of a focus on the identities of the individuals.

Culturally and ethnically-based sororities have also provided space for Women of Color to be their authentic selves on predominantly White campuses (Delgado-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Delgado-Guerrero, Cherniack, & Gloria, 2014; Greyerbiehl & Mitchell, 2014). Sororities help to recognize their "unique" experiences as Women of Color and meet their cultural needs (Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014). There is strong evidence that sororities can serve as a place to support Women of Color (Delgardo-Guerrero & Gloria, 2013; Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014; Greyerbiehl & Mitchell, 2014). For example, Greyerbiehl and Mitchell (2014) found that historically Black sororities are

"intersectional support groups because they provide African American women a unique space on predominantly White campuses—space where the overlapping of race and gender are acknowledged" (p. 284). These environments are also ones that have empowered Women of Color to fulfill their goals (Delgado-Guerrero et al., 2014).

Women of Color Disrupting Academic Spaces

Initiatives such as Women of Color support groups (DeFreece, 1987) and mentorship programs (Dickey, 1996; Nickels & Kowalski-Braun, 2012) have allowed Women of Color to find community, affirm their experiences, and challenge the notion that programs are one-size-fits-all. Often, students have been instrumental in establishing these initiatives, demonstrating their commitment to create more inclusive campus environments and serve their needs. More specifically, Women of Color have also sought to find spaces within academic programs where they experience marginalization from faculty and peers. White and Asian men have dominated STEM fields (Ong et al., 2017). All women, but especially Women of Color, have had to navigate exclusion, othering, and stereotypes about their abilities in STEM. One way they have done that is be participating in counterspaces during their time as undergraduates in their STEM program to challenge their experiences in "mainstream spaces" (Ong et al., 2017, p. 30).

Women of Color have been able to find space to collaborate with others and develop their consciousness in academic disciplines that more specifically address issues of inequity, including Gender Studies and Ethnic Studies. They have however also encountered marginalization in these spaces that do not always address how systems of domination interlock to shape their lives (Arvin et al., 2013; Chai, 1985; Goodstein & Gyant, 1990).

Women of Color have assisted in the development of such programs that speak directly to them and the inequities they experience (Goodstein & Gyant, 1990). Such was the case with students at Pennsylvania State University where students demanded a "minor of our own," demanding a focus on issues specific to Women of Color. This type of space could be considered an *academic counterspace*, as it challenges mainstream discourse, but also the discourse in ethnic and women's and gender studies spaces. This is further expanded on by scholars like Lee (2000) who emphasize how even in Women's and Gender Studies programs, courses that focus on Women of Color can be perceived solely as marginal and oppositional knowledge/consciousness.

Academic spaces that center the experiences of Women of Color are intended to make their experiences the focus of the curriculum (Kim, 2001; Vaccaro & Camba-Kelsay, 2016) rather than exclude or fail to acknowledge them, which has been the accepted or acceptable canon (Chow, 1987; Comas-Díaz, 1991; Liu, 2006; Zinn et al., 1986).

When curriculum centers the voices of Women of Color, it supports their desire to engage in self-advocacy (Vaccaro & Camba-Kelsay, 2016) These courses serve to increase their consciousness on the interconnectedness of their identities and the marginalization they experience (Kim, 2001). Considering education has been "a tool of colonization that serves to teach students allegiance to the status quo" (hooks, 2010b, p. 29), particularly at the K-12 levels, it is not surprising that Women of Color have not been exposed to how interlocking systems of domination influence their lives (Chai, 1985). Participation of Women of Color in courses that center their experiences and histories can be an act of resistance as they engage in raising their own consciousness in

collaboration with peers. Campus events and programs can also be considered informal learning spaces as they have provided spaces of support for Women of Color and acknowledged "'othered' histories and knoweldges" that "are also not integrated into the everyday teaching and learning environment" (Verjee, 2013, p. 30).

In a discussion with Elizabeth Martínez (1994), Dr. Angela Davis said, "there are so many ways in which we can conceptualize coalitions, alliances, and networks that we would be doing ourselves a disservice to argue that there is only one way to construct relations across racial and ethnic boundaries" (p. 1). In higher education, one of the ways Women of Color have been able to create alliances and networks is by creating and engaging in counterspaces or space creation (Hernandez Rivera, 2020). Although these spaces can indirectly create more equitable conditions for Women of Color, they do not always receive institutional support or challenge the oppressive structures of the institution. By participating in these spaces, however, Women of Color have cultivated bonds among themselves because of shared experiences of interconnected oppression (Lenzy, 2019a; Chai, 1985; Mihesuah, 1996; Revilla, 2004a). In the final section of this review I present themes that elucidate the thematic nature of Women of Color's experience.

Generating Themes and Understanding Across Experiences

It is important to reiterate that I use the phrase *Women of Color* as a term of political solidarity that ties the struggles of Women of Color together. Although the experiences of Women of Color vary based on race, ethnicity, class, sexual identity, gender expression, phenotype, skin color, citizenship status, and more, the review of

literature above underscores themes that connect their experiences with activism and intersectionality.

The first of these themes is that Women of Color have experienced oppression and marginalization in higher education that is racially-gendered (Bowker, 1993; Castagno, 2005; Delgado Bernal, 2002; Esquibel, & Rich, 2013; Hightower Langston, 2003; Lajimodiere, 2011; Robinson, et. al, 2013; Sue et al., 2009; Rodriguez et al., 2000; Sólorzano; 2005). This specific form of marginality has, however, seldom been represented in the mainstream discourse about equity in education. Although they have confronted their marginalization and created coalitions to feel less isolated, there is little research that examines their experiences as activists combatting institutional marginalization and marginalization in movements (Chu, 1986; Lenzy, 2019a; Waterman & Lindley, 2013).

What is known about their history of activism underscores the value that Women of Color place in education (Amin, 2018; Beltrán, 2010; Hogan, 1981; Liang, 1998; McCluskey, 2014; Oboler, 1995; Yes, 1992). They have been leaders and created significant contributions to movements of justice in educational settings (Griggs Fleming 1993; Harrison, 2001; Hightower Langston, 2003; Jeffries, 2003; Chow, 1992; Sólorzano et al., 2005).

Within social movements both in and outside of education, Women of Color have experienced challenges in engaging the complexity of their identities (Basu, 1997; Facio & Lara, 2014; Lenzy, 2019a). They have been forced to minimize their gender in racial equity movements and experienced sexism from men of Color when challenging sexism and asserting themselves in these men-dominated spaces (Beltrán, 2010; Chu, 1986;

Espinoza, 2001; Hightower Langston, 2003; Mihesuah, 1996; Milkman, & Terriquez, 2012; Springer, 2005). Their efforts have also been silenced by mainstream media that have privileged the voices of men (McElderry & Hernandez Rivera, 2017; Hightower Langston, 2003; Hollis, 2019; Milkman & Terriquez, 2012).

Gender equality movements have also minimized the experiences of Women of Color and failed to engage dynamics of race and class that affect Women of Color (Carranza, n.d.; Hightower Langston, 2003; Mariscal, 2005; Chow, 1992). Although Women of Color have attempted to challenge these movements from within (Gonzalez, 2009; Johnson, 2004; Lenzy, 2019a; Robnett, 1996; Urrieta, 2004; Villenas et al., 2006), particularly in racial justice movements where they believed unity was necessary (Beltrán, 2010; Chu,1986; Hightower Langston, 2003), they have also developed their own movements and spaces, specifically in higher education settings (Chu, 1986; Croom, et. al, 2017; Lenzy, 2019a; Chow, 1992; Revilla, 2004b; Segura & Pesquera, 1998). The history of exclusion present in the literature that Women of Color have encountered in racial and gender equity movements specifically points to the various forms of intersectionality highlighted by Crenshaw (1991). Additionally, their effort in challenging spaces from within, as well as creating their own highlights how they both take on and develop a Mestiza consciousness. At times this consciousness appears to emerge through the exclusion they experience and other times they engage in understanding the need to engage men in their race and ethnic communities in the flight for liberation. In doing this they recognize the necessity of moving beyond dualistic thinking.

Women of Color students who have participated in movements within their respective ethnic communities, have experienced violence and imprisonment as a result

of their participation in these spaces (Espinoza, 2001; Griggs Flemming, 1993; Hightower Langston, 2003). To thrive and survive, community needs and engaging community practices have been central in informing the activists' efforts of Women of Color (Barkdull, 2009; Bingham et al., 2014; Bradley, 2003; Chu, 1986; Enck-Wanzer, 2010; Hernandez, 2012; Lajimodiere, 2011; White Shield, 2009).

Finally, Women of Color have felt left out of conversations and social movements about equity and diversity because their ethnic communities are not perceived as legitimately experiencing oppression, especially Native (Castagno, 2005) and Asian (Grim et al., 2019) women. Nonetheless, history has shown that Women of Color have a legacy of activism in educational settings and a complicated relationship with social justice movements. My research builds on an understanding of these experiences by specifically examining how undergraduate Women of Color work with peers on their campus to create equitable conditions and environments.

Chapter 3:

Methodology

This chapter focuses on the methodological, ontological, and epistemological stance by which the research is informed, how it is implemented and executed, and its trustworthiness and limitations. The methodology that is presented and is used for this research study is a critical qualitative methodology (Denzin, 2015). Uncovering the voices and experiences of Women of Color are most central to this research and in order to do this in a way that honors their voices and complexity of experiences, a critical qualitative approach is most appropriate to this study (Denzin, 2015).

The approaches and practices utilized in this study also recognize Women of Color as holders of knowledge (Johnson-Bailey, 2004), and in this, they are contributors to the research process. The Women of Color undergraduate students in this study are at a predominantly White institution and involved in some form of advocacy and/or activism on campus. Finally, in this chapter, I explain how I analyzed and interpreted the data, informed by intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) and Mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa, 1999).

Critical Qualitative Methodology

A critical qualitative methodology uplifts experiences that are often invisible in research. It also uses methods that make sense for the nature of the study and the participants, and includes an interrogation of systems of domination (Denzin, 2015). Critical qualitative inquiry emphasizes the intentional interrogation, critique, and analysis of power to address social issues and contribute to equitable change. A variety of education scholars have used critical methodologies to examine issues at the intersection

of race-ethnicity and gender (Croom et al., 2017; Espino et al., 2010; Evans-Winters & Esposito, 2010; Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012; Patton & Davis, 2016; Smith, 2008; Squire & McCann, 2018). These scholars have advocated for ways of doing research that honor traditions and practices in the respective community of focus and provided said community with considerations to inform their practice and experience. These elements, in addition to contributing to social change, are imperative in conducting critical qualitative research (Denzin, 2015).

As Sprague (2016) explained, "methodology emerges as the terrain where philosophy and action meet, where the implications of what we believe for how we should proceed get worked out." (p. 5). In this, my ontology is one which is critical, and understands reality as socially constructed and influenced by power dynamics within institutional structures and interpersonal relationships. As a scholar and researcher, I reject ideas of neutrality and objectivity in research, which would assume that this research is less rigorous or subject to heightened bias (Creswell, 2003; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Being objective can be defined as "not influenced by personal feelings or opinions in considering and representing facts" (Oxford, 2019). There is a particular level of privilege in taking an objective stance in research, a stance that claims *no opinion* in the outcomes of research and asks that researchers have *no personal feeling* about injustice or inequity. Guidelines for academic writing asks scholars to be "cool, detached, impersonal – 'objective,' at least in tone" (Thompson, 2004, p. 54); this centers the oppressor and further marginalizes and masks the oppression experienced by those on the margins.

As a Woman of Color, I do not have the privilege of being objective or devoid of emotion as it relates to the experiences of other Women of Color. Although more Women of Color are now entering academic spaces and researching the experiences of those in their communities and the oppressive forces that bind them, this has not always been the case. Historically, when research was conducted about Women of Color, it was executed by White people who occasionally viewed them through deficit lenses, as tokens, or have not always accurately represented the experiences of Women of Color (Chai, 1985; Collins, 1986; Mihesuah, 1996; Mihesuah, 2003).

For me then, "the personal is political" and I have engaged my rage and anger (Lorde, 1981; Rodriguez & Boahene, 2012) about systems of domination in an effort to work with those who are marginalized in education. It has called me to develop research projects that will facilitate efforts around social change and support the experiences of Women of Color students, colleagues, and community members. It has asked me to be continuously reflexive and understand research as a product and process from which we can learn, but which also contains colonial elements that can be potentially damaging to communities and persons (Patel, 2015). As Bhattacharya (2009) argued, "there is not purist decolonizing space devoid of imperialism, but spaces where multiple colonizing and resisting discourses exist and interact simultaneously" (p. 105). In this research process, I grapple with these tensions and engage in a continuous process of reflexivity.

Epistemology

My critical race feminist epistemological stance also drives the development of this research. Critical Race Feminism (CRF) is largely known as a theoretical framework that first emerged to address the legal concerns and inequities impacting Women of Color

that have not always been captured through the use of theories that intentionally and inadvertently essentialize and make their realities invisible (Carter, 2012; Wing, 2003). CRF has been used as a conceptual, epistemic, and/or theoretical framing and has also informed researcher's methodological decision making (Evans-Winter & Esposito, 2010; Patton & Ward, 2016; Verjee, 2013).

As a theoretical framework, CRF has challenged this essentialization of a singular woman's voice that is representative of all women, while also demonstrating a collective experience that exists among Women of Color (Wing, 1997). Evans-Winter and Esposito (2010) provide the following tenets for a CRF theoretical framework:

- a theoretical lens and movement that purports that Women of Color's experiences; thus perspectives are different from the experiences of men of Color and those of White women
- focuses on the lives of Women of Color who face multiple forms of discrimination due to the intersections of race, class, and gender within a system of White male patriarchy and racist oppression
- asserts the multiple identities and consciousness of Women of Color (i.e., anti-essentialist)
- multidisciplinary in scope and breadth; and
- calls for theories and practices that simultaneously study and combat gender and racial oppression.

Because I understand the world as largely informed by race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality, the tenets of CRF theory simultaneously provide an explanation of CRF as an epistemological stance for me. The production of knowledge requires tools

informed by Women of Color and an application that can challenge and resist against oppressive forces. In this research then, CRF has transcended its theoretical nature to one that informs and guides how I produce and understand knowledge production.

Research Questions

As underscored in the literature review, research that focuses on how power shapes the campus and activist experiences of Women of Color is practically non-existent. This is the case, even though history has pointed to how they have been active resisters and change seekers, while being impacted by power dynamics (DeFreece, 1987; Kim, 2001; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Lenzy, 2019b; Remedios & Snyder, 2015; Vaccaro & Camba-Kelsay, 2016; Revilla, 2004b). Therefore, the lack of literature, in collaboration with the above worldview, epistemological stance, and ontological orientation, all supported the development of the research questions. Additionally, I had previously conducted a study in the field specific to Women of Color that has also informed the research questions and is an extension of the work done for that study. The research questions are as follows:

1) How does power shape the experiences of undergraduate Women of Color engaged in activism and advocacy at the University of Missouri?
2) How do Women of Color experience exclusion in their activist/advocacy work and/or spaces on campus?
3) What strategies do Women of Color employ to resist marginalization on campus – in and outside of activist work?

The next section focuses on the design of the research and how it is implemented in order to respond to the research questions.

Research Design

The design of this research study was developed and informed by my critical race feminist epistemological stance. Thus, stories and experiences were central to the research design. “Storytelling seeks to expose and subvert the dominant discourse, building a sense of community among those at the margins of society by providing a space to share their sense of reality and experiences” (Rodriguez & Boahene, 2012, p. 451). Although one story is able to capture a range of complex experiences (Irey, 2013), storytelling also has the power to provide collective meaning about larger systems of domination, as articulated in other scholarly works (Chu, 1986; Waterman & Lindley, 2013).

Methods of storytelling such as counter-storytelling (Solórzano et al., 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Verjee, 2013), pláticas (Guajardo y Guajardo, 2008; Espino et al., 2010), testimonio (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012), oral history and traditions (Hogan, 1981; Pérez, 2016; Thomas, 2005; Gluck & Patai, 2016), sista circles (Johnson, 2015), and talking circles (Castagno, 2005; Tachine et al., 2016) are tools of resistance and methodologies in their own right. They honor practices in communities of Color, while also challenging positivist paradigms and dominant stories (Yosso, 2006). They bring to life the experiences of those whose knowledge may have not been captured without storytelling (Johnson-Bailey, 2003; Thomas, 2005). They are informed by an understanding that power, community, reciprocity, criticality, and challenging systems of domination are all part of the research process.

Women of Color scholars have implemented storytelling as a method to illuminate the experiences of Women of Color and other marginalized communities (Johnson-Bailey,

2003; Yosso, 2007; The Feminist Group, 2001; Vaz, 1997). Hogan (1981) stated that storytelling provides Indigenous Women with the ability to "define" themselves through remembering and "it is through this remembering that we survive" (p. 3). Sharing experiences can and has been a tool of resistance against dominant ideologies and systems that have sought to make invisible the stories and experiences of Women of Color. This research then challenges apartheids of knowledge (Pérez Huber, 2008) and benefits the community and individuals on whom it is focused.

Through the grounding of a critical race feminist epistemology, I identified and utilized methods that could excavate the experiences of participants, examine power, acknowledge the interconnectedness of identities, and allow participants to gain from the research experience. Participants recount their experiences, but also have the opportunity to reflect on them and connect to myself and one another in this research. This supports the facilitation of a research process that sees reciprocity as central and also challenges power dynamics in data collection. More specifically, the methods of data collection I used were testimonios, pláticas, and sista circles, which I discuss further in this chapter. Next, I describe the context for the study to situate participants' lived experiences with power, activism, and the campus environment.

Study Site

This study takes place at the University of Missouri, founded in 1839 as an institution originally only accessible to White men. The institution is part of a larger campus system, consisting of four universities including the "flagship," the focus of this study: University of Missouri at Columbia, or most often called "Mizzou." The system is overseen by one president, who reports to a Board of Curators, which is responsible for

the system. This board is appointed by the Governor of the state. The University of Missouri was declared a land-grant institution in 1870 (University of Missouri History, 2017) and is a Research I institution, which has been part of the Association of American Universities since 1908 (The History of Mizzou 1908, 2018). The institution is also categorized in Division I sports and has been part of the Southeastern Conference, the nation's top athletic conference, since 2012 (The History of Mizzou 2012, 2018). Undergraduate enrollment has remained largely White at the institution, with White students making up a little over 77% of the population (Institutional Research & Quality Improvement, 2017). Women students of Color, including international students, make up between 11 to 12% of the population. (N.B., It is difficult to provide an exact statistic, as the international student population includes White women.)

The history of marginalized communities at the institution, more specifically Women of Color, is obscure and largely invisible; however, from what is known, ideologies of colonialism and slavery have permeated the historical legacy of the institution. Although there are no longer "federally" recognized tribes in the state of Missouri, the institution was built on land that was at one point occupied predominantly by two tribes: the Osage and Missouria (Seven, n.d.). During the Indian Removals Act of the 1800s, Indigenous peoples were forced to leave the native lands that the university would later be built on. The institution has also been in possession of Native American skeletal remains and artifacts for which students advocated repatriation (Hasan, 1997).

The university was modeled after the University of Virginia and Thomas Jefferson's ideology on knowledge (Dalton, 2015). One of the most prominent, if not the most prominent area on campus, Francis Quadrangle, hosts a statue of Jefferson himself.

Jefferson was a “founding father” of the country and slave-owner. The removal of the statue has been called for by students on different occasions (Oide, 2016), including 2020 and the fall of 2015 when students placed post-it notes on the statue that read “slave-owner” and “rapist.”

Mizzou was established before slavery was abolished in Missouri in 1865 (Dalton, 2015). White women were admitted specifically into the College of Education at the institution in 1867, while Black students were admitted in 1950, over 100 years after the institution was established and almost 80 years after White women were admitted. There may have been instances when people of Color passed for White and attended the university, but this history is invisible. Women of Color are largely absent from the institution’s history, partly because they have not accessed the institution for the same duration of time as their White peers. Additionally, the institution has not valued or considered keeping track of this history.

One example of this is Lucile Bluford, who was originally accepted into the Missouri School of Journalism in 1939. Once she arrived on campus, however, she was denied admission because she was Black (Dalton, 2015). The institution just recently recognized her by establishing a residential facility in her name. Marion O’Fallon Oldham was also denied admission to the institution in 1948 because of her race (Yan, 2002). Later in 1977, she became the first Black woman who was on the Board of Curators for the University of Missouri System (History, Gaines Oldham Black Culture Center (G/OBCC), n.d.).

Black students established the Black Culture House on Mizzou’s campus in 1972, later becoming the Gaines Oldham Black Culture Center in 2002 (History, 2019). Up

until that point, there had been no other building on campus named after a Black person. The first Women's Studies course at the institution was taught in 1971, with the Women's Center later opening in 1975 (Women's Center, n.d.). Students, faculty, and staff across campus championed the establishment of the Women's Center. The Multicultural Center on campus first began as the Office of Multicultural Student Services and later evolved into a center that supported student development, provided programming, and education through peer-facilitation. The LGBTQ Resource Center was established in 1995 as the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Resource Center, later adding transgender identities and queer identities to the title (Stuckenschneider, 2015).

These centers have served as opportunities for students to activate their consciousness, self-preserve their identities, and participate in creating more equitable and inclusive experiences for marginalized students on campus. One example of this was through the student activism that occurred from fall of 2014-fall of 2015; centers such as the G/OBCC and Multicultural Center served as organizing and meeting locations for students. They have also at times failed to meet the needs of students at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities, such as Women of Color and Queer Students of Color (J. Perkins, personal communication, April, 2016; V. Buckner, personal communication, June, 2017). At times, this has resulted in the perpetuation and re-creation of oppressive environments for students. Although Women of Color have been accessing the institution as students for over 50 years, initiatives and services that speak to their specific experience have been developed in more recent years.

The first of these was the Mizzou Black Women's Initiative, which began in 2010 and was initiated by Black women students with the help of the G/OBCC staff (Hibsch,

2010). Until recently the initiative functioned as a student organization and now operates through the G/OBCC directly and is guided by a leadership team that consists of students and the Coordinator of the Center (V. Buckner, personal communication, November 15, 2018). It provides a for-credit course, one-on-one support, and informal social events and activities. The Womxn of Color Retreat began in 2015 and students, with the support of the Multicultural Center staff, started it (Womxn of Color Retreat, 2018). The retreat supports Women of Color through the goals of education, community, understanding, empowerment, and healing. The retreat is organized each year by a committee of Women of Color students, many of whom had attended the retreat in previous years. Finally, WOCHA – Women of Color Honor and Ambition is the most recent initiative beginning in 2017 (WOCHA, 2019). WOCHA seeks to support Women of Color in their personal, academic, cultural, social, professional, and leadership pursuits, pairing students with a mentor and participation in monthly workshops. An interesting component of all initiatives is that Women of Color must "apply" to attend or be part of said initiative. Aside from these more recently established efforts there have not been institutional spaces for Women of Color to work together and create community outside of student organizations and sororities.

Research Participants

I recruited undergraduate Women of Color to participate in this study who were in their junior or senior years. In order to qualify for participation, they had to be involved in some form of activism/advocacy on issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or an interconnectedness of issues. I defined activism as any act that sought to challenge and/or resist against oppressive and exclusive cultures, interactions, and ideologies. I defined

advocacy as speaking out against this oppression or exclusion. This could include in any campus space (e.g. classrooms, clubs, organizations, campus jobs) or social media platform. I specifically recruited students who were in the latter part of their college experience because they had been at the institution a longer period of time and would likely have more experiences with campus activism and advocacy. I purposefully sampled participants based on the criteria and the research questions being asked. I also utilized snowball sampling, which consisted of asking participants I recruited to recommend others who they thought would be interested in the study. (Merriam, 2009). Although critical qualitative research can be conducted with anywhere from one to a number of participants, I recruited five participants to provide rich descriptions (Bhatia, 2011) and attempted to identify collective meaning.

Based on my own experience as a practitioner and previously conducting a study with Women of Color students, I contacted students on campus with whom I had interacted and who I knew were engaged in activism and advocacy. In this process, I gaged their interest in participation and recruited two students through this purposeful sampling. I asked these students if there were individuals they knew of who might be interested in participating in the study (snowball sampling). They then reached out to their peers on my behalf to inquire on whether they would be interested in participating in this study and whether they would permit me to contact them personally. Although I did not intentionally seek participants who attended the Women of Color Retreat that occurs on campus, all participants had done so at some point. Thus, it is possible that they came to the study with a intersectional consciousness in relation to their race and gender.

Participants who had not participated in or sought out this type of experience may have provided different insights related to their identities.

Salient identities and experiences, as described by the participants themselves can be found below in Table 1. I provide more detail about each participant as I introduce them at the beginning of Chapter 4. Participants reviewed their own introduction to verify that it was an authentic representation of them. In the introduction and Table 1, I do not include participants' majors or areas of study, as this may make them more identifiable. Additionally, although in Chapter 4 I reference some organizations in which each participant was involved, I do not name all of the organizations/groups/activities to which each woman has affiliated herself. This is to protect her confidentiality.

Table 1

Identities of Participants

Participants' Chosen Pseudonyms	Salient Identities/Experiences
Dope	Black, woman, first-generation college student, and low SEC
Jasmine	Mexican & White (mixed), queer, middle class, rural upbringing
Mala	Chicana, woman, first-generation college student, and low SEC

Payal	South Asian, middle class, able-bodied, first-generation in the U.S.
Sehar	South Asian, Indian, woman, international student

Upon gathering contacts of students, I sent them recruitment letters (Appendix A) inviting them to participate in the study and asked if they would prefer to meet via phone or in person, so that I could explain the study. In these meetings, I explained the research study, outlined what participation entailed, and provided participants with any potential risks and benefits of participating in the research. I also worked to establish rapport and build relationships with participants. I got to know a bit more about them and some of what they were interested in getting out of the research process. Many of them were particularly interested in the sista circle component of the research.

The individual meetings with participants occurred once prior to data collection. I met with them in a location of their choosing on campus or close to campus (e.g., downtown area) for about an hour. I also answered questions they had and addressed potential concerns and gathered feedback and insights on the proposed research plan and execution. Participants expressed no concerns with said research plans and expressed enthusiasm about engaging in the process and the methods that would be used. Finally, as part of acknowledging their contributions to the research, I provided a monetary incentive to all participants of $100, outlined in the recruitment letter.

Data Collection

The research design of this study aligns with my critical qualitative approach to research, which seeks to "disrupt apartheids of knowledge" (Pérez Huber, 2008) and how knowledge is created and disseminated. There were three data collection methods in this study: testimonio, pláticas, and sista circles. They were used in collaboration with one another in order to provide narratives that were rich in detail.

As Critical Race Feminism challenges the essentialization of Women of Color, it is necessary to utilize approaches and methods that align with this form of resistance in research (Arvin et al., 2013; Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Collins, 2002). I, then, employed methods that have been crafted by Women of Color and that recognize our histories, cultures, and traditions of knowledge cultivation and sharing. All of the data were collected on the University of Missouri's campus or in a location in close proximity preferred by a participant. The exact location depended on what was best and most convenient for the student, and where I could ensure privacy. All of the data was collected during the fall 2019 semester and occurred in spaces like the Gaines-Oldham Black Culture Center and Multicultural Center on campus. Sista Circles occurred in my home, with permission from the participants to conduct them there. Below, I explain each method of data collection individually and then describe how they are used to build on each other.

Testimonio

Testimonio can be understood as a "product and a process" (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). It is a self-reflective process in which individuals document challenging experiences they have overcome through what The Feminist Group (2001) referred to as

"papelitos guardados" (protected or hidden papers). Historically, testimonios were used in Latin American countries in order for those who had experienced subjugation and persecution by governments to share their experiences (Burgos-Debray, 1984; Saporta Sternbach, 1991; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Nance, 2006; de los Rios, 2009). It has been employed as a therapeutic and healing practice for those who have experienced imprisonment and violence in countries such as Chile and human rights violations in Asian countries (Agger et al., 2012). Agger et al. (2012) document how testimonial therapy was modified in conjunction with cultural and religious practices in countries such as India, Cambodia, and the Philippines for individuals who survived torture. Chicana feminist scholars, in particular, have utilized testimonio and their Chicana feminist epistemologies to ground the use of testimonio (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012). Women of color have also used their own personal experiences and testimonies as an opportunity to highlight how their personal struggles and observations are reflective of larger structural issues (Christian, 1989; Saavedra & Salazar Pérez, 2012).

Testimonios affirm both what Critical Race Feminism and de/colonial researchers argue, unearthing what is invisible and erased, as well as challenging essentialism through honoring individual experience and recognizing how it is part of a collective narrative. It also aligns with my critical worldview, because it seeks to "bring about awareness and possible change through consciousness-raising about our collective struggle and resistance" (Pour-Khorshid, 2016, p. 20). Scholars have used testimonio to address different research questions. The theme that ties their research together, however, is that scholars seek to which we can learn in order to dismantle systems of domination

and find sources of strength that foster resistance and persistence (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; Collins, 2019; Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001).

Testimonio has been executed in diverse ways (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001). The first of these processes requires an "interlocutor," or in this case, researcher, who listens to the testimonio and records and transcribes it (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). The second is one in which the testimonialista documents their own story and, in this, would be understood as both participant and researcher (Delgado Bernal et al., 2012). A testimonialista can be understood as a woman who is writing and recounting her own testimony. The third strategy is one in which testimonialistas participate in telling and listening to their stories and experiences in groups, after which they construct their testimonios (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001). Prieto and Villenas (2012) created testimonios out of a process of collaborative dialogue, similar to the Latina Feminist Group. Testimonios as a method also provide flexibility and agency in the research process, as participants write and tell their stories on their terms. In this research, I provided participants with prompts that encouraged them to reflect on their experiences in a written format. They could respond to all prompts or focus on ones of particular interest. I then analyzed and used testimonios to guide and inform pláticas. I discuss this further in the "Implementing the Research Methods" section of this chapter.

Pláticas

The second data collection method in this research study is pláticas, or pláticando. Similar to testimonio, pláticas are a collaborative process, in which individuals verbally dialogue with someone else or a group, about their experience and share knowledge in

order to gain insights and understanding (Guajardo y Guajardo, 2008; Espino et al., 2010). Pláticas can occur between two people or in a group. Pláticas are similar to semi-structured interviews; however, they are more conversational in nature, with the researcher being an investigator and participant.

Communities of Color have participated in pláticas to share and better understand their experiences, knowledge, frustrations, joys, and consejos (advice) (Espino et al., 2010; Flores & Garcia, 2009; Guzmán, 2012; Hernandez Rivera & Frias, 2021; Kovach, 2009; Pour-Khorshid, 2016; Tachine et al., 2016). Within higher education, scholars have employed pláticas, or dialogues, to understand their own experiences as Latina doctoral students (Espino et al., 2010), as faculty (Prieto & Villenas, 2012), and as practitioners (Hernandez Rivera & Frias, 2021; McElderry & Hernandez Rivera, 2017).

Flores and Garcia (2009) took a critical race feminist approach to explore the development of a Latina space on their campus that engaged dialogues on a range of topics. They argued that pláticas were designed using several principles. First, they recognized participants as co-constructors of knowledge and welcomed their contributions. Second, pláticas connected experiences to research inquiry. Third, pláticas serve as a healing space. Finally, pláticas emphasize reciprocity and vulnerability between researchers and participants through reflection. Like Flores and Garcia, I consider pláticas as informed by a critical race feminist epistemology; however, I also understand pláticas through Chicana/Latina feminist theory and work. Fierros and Delgado Bernal's (2016) principles of a Chicana feminist plática methodology is how I arrived at executing plática as a practice and method in this study. I emphasize the necessity of Women of Colors' larger political collective struggle and, thus, recognize the

necessity for Women of Color to use dialogical tools like plática to engage in intellectual and consciousness-raising that combat oppressive systems (Flores & Garcia, 2009; Lin et al., 2004; Noriega, 2015; Seo & Hinton, 2009; Smith, 1989).

Because in plática participants co-construct meaning and understanding, we can work through the process of answering questions together. When participants struggled to respond to questions, plática allowed me the opportunity to provide my own understanding of the question or offer up my own experience as a point of departure. In doing so, the process also became more reciprocal because participants benefit from my vulnerability as I shared my experience and perspectives. This is something some qualitative researchers might refer to as "leading." However, I worked hard to recognize and encourage participants' agency in the research process. Thus, sharing my perspective or experience did not always mean they would attempt to align with mine. They may have offered a different perspective and corrected me when I misunderstood them. I honored them as co-creators, as opposed to perceiving them as passive subjects. I welcomed them to pose questions to me as the researcher, ask for clarification, refuse to answer questions, and engage in a broad range of emotions. In some instances, participants were frustrated or angered; plática allowed me to share in that rage with them and validate it. In other instances, they were sad and shed tears; in these cases, I consoled participants and shared in their despair.

When researchers use pláticas and testimonio, they recognize participants as holders and creators of knowledge and engage them as collaborators in the research process. This challenges dominant ways of doing informed by eurocentricity (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Pérez Huber, 2009a) and supports a critical worldview, which accounts

for issues of power to make it more agentive for participants. A similar agency and reciprocity can also be found in sista circles.

Sista Circles

As I mentioned in Chapter 1, sista circles have been used both in practice with Black women (Croom et al., 2017; Gaston et al., 2007) and as a methodology (Johnson, 2015) employed to study the experiences of Black women. This methodology identified by Johnson (2015) has allowed for an approach to research that provided insights about the experiences of Black women teachers. Within her work, she recognized sista circles as a historically empowering, cultural practice among Black women dating back to the 1800s (Johnson, 2015). After a personal communication during the time I developed this research, she also named the importance of using this methodology or method as an opportunity to bring Women of Color together collectively. Collier's (2017) dissertation work also utilized the sista circle methodology to examine the belonging and experiences of Black women in doctoral programs at PWIs.

These kinds of practices can also be found in other communities of Color such as, "sharing circles" or "talking circles" in Indigenous communities (Castagno, 2005; Tachine et al., 2016). These circles recognize the long tradition of dialogue and story sharing present in Tribal culture (Kovach, 2009). Latinas and Asian women have also participated in group discussions in order to empower themselves, raise consciousness about systems of oppression, and understand their experiences (Flores & Garcia, 2009; Ngan-Ling, 1992; Noriega, 2015; The Latina Feminist Group, 2001).

Within this study, sista circles were used to invite participants to share their stories and learn from the stories of others. Kovach (2009) described the act of

storytelling in Indigenous communities as contributing to something greater than the individual; “stories are vessels for passing along teachings, medicines, and practices that can assist members of the collective” (Kovach, 2009, para. 4). The act of Women of Color telling their stories in a shared space can supply them with knowledge valuable for their own lives and in doing so “provide liberating life possibilities” (Squire & McCann, 2018, p. 407).

The stories and insights of other women’s experiences serve as an opportunity for Women of Color to learn from one another by “offering advice and wisdom” and gaining strength in sharing, supporting, and validating one another. During a conversation with Johnson (personal communication, June 10, 2019) about her methodology, she explained that conducting sista circles is “a work of healing and not just a work of research,” which supports participants in a way that is mutually beneficial.

There are three distinguishing characteristics of sista circles: (1) communication dynamics, (2) centrality of empowerment, and (3) researcher as participant (Johnson, 2015). Communication dynamics encourages participants to show up as themselves by using language, speech, facial expressions, other non-verbal communication, and phrases that are authentic to who they are. In some instances, this may mean that participants engage in colloquial language or words and phrases that are specific to other languages they speak and best articulate how they feel. The setting is informal and one where Women of Color can engage in conversation over breaking bread. The location should be a place where they do not experience oppression and can be free and will be selected by the group. The next characteristic, centrality of empowerment, encourages participants to “access their personal or collective power to strengthen one another” (Johnson, 2015, p.

48). In this, women's experiences and insights are understood and validated as knowledge and as beneficial to others in the group. The final characteristic, researcher as participant, asks that I engage in different capacities. In this process, I navigated between the following roles: host, facilitator, participant, observer, and note-taker. A researcher's participation in the research process alongside participants is less common than some of the previously mentioned roles; however, in sista circles it provides reciprocity that benefits participants.

Implementing the Research Methods. The three methods of this research were conducted in two similar phases. In the first phase, participants were sent an email that consisted of questions and prompts (Appendix C) that they should cover in the first testimonio write up. They wrote and sent me a written testimonio before the first plática occurred. When I received the testimonio, I read through it to prepare for the first plática and identified questions based on the testimionio that would elicit more detail (Appendix D). The written testimonio largely served as a point of departure for me to further explore and expand on participants feelings and experiences. However, I did not ask all questions that were prepared, which is common in a plática. In addition, other questions emerged and were posed as a result of being in dialogue.

Before the plática began, the participant and I read through the testimonio. I then encouraged participants to think reflexively about their story and pose questions to themselves, or potentially identify points where they felt they could elaborate in our dialogue. Almost all platicás were about 90 minutes long. Pláticas occured in a location that was convenient and comfortable for the participant; each was audio recorded with participant consent. There were moments in plática when participants seemed to struggle

with how they felt or to articulate a particular thought. In these moments, participants reflected, wrote, and processed their thoughts and feelings in journal I provided to them. Sometimes I chose to use the journal as an opportunity for the participants to reflect on a prompt. This was very much dependent on the individual participant and their needs. After concluding the plática, I transcribed the dialogue and sent the transcription to the participant to confirm the accuracy.

After all pláticas were completed, the first sista circle took place with all participants. At the start of the sista circle, I discussed the function of the circles, my role within them, and worked with participants to establish community values. This assisted in cultivating a supportive environment, which is important in using sista circle as a method. With participant consent, I audio recorded the sista circles. Both sista circles took place in my home, which was decided upon by the collective group. As part of the process, I prepared a meal for participants, which contributed to the loving and supportive environment expected for sista circles. Although I had developed questions for the first sista circle based upon my research questions and frameworks (Appendix E), I additionally prepared questions that emerged from the initial round of plática transcripts. We also utilized journals in sista circles as an opportunity to reflect on prompts, process, or gather our thoughts and emotions. I repeated this same process for the second sista circle phase (Appendix F, G, H). All participants participated in both sista circles, except for Jasmine, who was unable to make it to the second sista circle and cancelled the day of.

At the conclusion of the second sista circle, I shared the frameworks and the analytic strategies described below with participants. I also described the next steps of the

research process. I also shared my initial analysis during the final plática and sista circle, which served as a way to "member check" themes with participants. It also provided entrée to discuss what participants took away from the research. Participants were able to further elaborate on the data or raise questions about my interpretations, which I incorporated as I continued to analyze data. I also created a recommended reading list for each participant based on her consciousness level and interests.

Sista circles were the most difficult aspect of the study to schedule. In the second sista circle, Jasmine had to cancel at the last minute; thus, I asked her to listen to the recording, as well as send her questions to learn what she was interested in expanding on, connecting to, or exploring areas that related to her experience.

Analysis

The central tool of analysis in this research is Delgado Bernal's (1998b) cultural intuition. In her explanation of how a Chicana feminist epistemology supports educational research, Delgado Bernal (1998b) outlined how Chicanas have "unique viewpoints that can provide us with a perspective I call 'cultural intuition'" (p. 563). It is based on a Chicana's "personal quality," which provides them with the ability to give data meaning. Delgado-Bernal goes on to identify four sources of cultural intuition: personal experience, existing literature, professional experience, and the analytic research process. Delgado Bernal and scholars, such as Flores and Garcia (2009), have utilized cultural intuition as a tool of analysis in interpreting testimonios. Acknowledging that Chicanas and other Women of Color have experiences and understandings of the world that are unique, validates and recognizes us as scholars who arrive to research with unique insights and knowledge that contributes to and benefit the research process. A

CRF epistemology (Evans-Winter & Esposito, 2010) acknowledges the experiences and perspectives of Women of Color as different from White women and men of Color, and with this, I recognize that my experiences as a Woman of Color and interactions with Women of Color in practice contributed to understanding what the data are saying.

My cultural intuition in this study is informed by my own personal experience and lived reality, having previously been an undergraduate student and Woman of Color, my experience as a practitioner working with Women of Color, my knowledge of the extant literature about Women of Color, and the research process itself. Other scholars have used cultural intuition as an "open and reiterative process of bridging and building theory from lived experiences" (Pérez Huber & Cueva, 2012, p. 397). Although my intention was not to "build theory," but rather to use theory to interpret the findings, the open and iterative process that cultural intuition allowed was important to this study. The data were able to speak for themselves, and thus, centered participants' voices and aligning them with a CRF epistemological stance.

Analytic Process

The meaning-making process in this study was more inductive, beginning with becoming familiar with the documents through reading, re-reading, listening, transcribing, and memoing: followed by open coding; then code mapping to organize and develop categories: and concluding with generating themes. Each data source – testimonios, pláticas, and sista circles – was analyzed separately using a similar process. I developed a larger narrative for each participant, identifying major themes and analyzing each narrative. I then generated themes across narratives that resulted in a meta-narrative that underscored the relationship between participants' experiences and power dynamics.

Because CRF recognizes the multiple identities Women of Color possess and calls on those who ascribe to this epistemology to focus on how multiple forms of oppression shape their lives, I paid particular attention to how each participant uniquely experienced the campus, even within the meta-narrative. The meta-narrative is a collective narrative of struggle and resistance; yet, I tried to avoid essentializing participants' identities and experiences. One strategy I used to do this was to first introduce each participant and highlight some of their salient identities, as well as key factors that shaped their understanding of themselves, their activism, and their overall experiences. I also paid attention to how other systems of oppression emerged in the lives of participants, such as heterosexism and classism, in addition to how their identities were racialized and gendered in distinct ways.

As mentioned earlier, for the first level of analysis of testimonios I re-read the narratives and memos both in the margins and at the end of the document (Delgado Bernal, 1998b; Saldaña, 2016; Stake, 1995). The next stage consisted of open or "initial" coding (Charmaz, 2006). This form of coding is the first stage of the grounded theory approach to data analysis and Charmaz (2006) identifies its goal to "remain open to all possible theoretical directions" (p. 46). Although I am not conducting grounded theory, the value of open coding is that it supports an "open and iterative process" necessary in using cultural intuition by allowing for all possibilities; it allowed the women's voices to be the firmest in data analysis. Therefore, through open coding, I was able to employ cultural intuition and ascribe codes/dynamics/concepts developed from my intuition or directly from the words of participants. For the next phase of analysis, I began by transcribing the pláticas and sista circles (Bailey, 2008) and journaled about what I

understood from each transcription (Wolgemuth, 2014). I then repeated the analytic process described above for both pláticas and sista circles.

Next, I created a write up for each participant. The eight- to12-page (single-spaced) document highlighted and analyzed participants' salient experiences. I then met with each participant individually to plática about their write up. I sent each participant their document to review before our meeting and encouraged them to make notes, pose questions, or identify concerns to discuss at our meeting.

Upon concluding these meetings, I began a process that is comparable to code mapping (Saldaña, 2016). Code mapping is a strategy in which the researcher takes open codes and re-organizes them into categories to eventually develop themes (Afara, 2008). The main rationale for using this strategy is that it is an iterative process. The data for each participant were compiled to begin the process of developing themes across narratives. I put the individual narratives in dialogue with others to identify connections. Through this process, codes and themes emerged across the data. For example, multiple participants described a sense of distrust or caution in engaging those with dominant or privileged identities. Although they may have articulated this in different ways and within different communities, placing their experiences in dialogue with one another allowed for themes of "distrust" or "caution" to emerge.

Through several iterations, I re-defined and shaped themes to be truly reflective of what was being communicated in participants' stories. I continuously examined the excerpts and quotes that comprised a theme to be sure that the original essence of what was conveyed was not lost through the process. Additionally, I used my research journal (Russell & Kelly, 2002) after gathering, transcribing, and analyzing each data source.

After completing the steps described above, I scheduled a final sista circle that was conducted via Zoom (a video conferencing platform). This final circle did not generate new data for the findings, but informed and confirmed the thematic analysis and recommendations presented in Chapter 5. Their recommendations can benefit the community of focus (Evans-Winter & Esposito, 2010; Collins & Blige, 2016; Mikesell et al., 2013; Strand et al., 2003), and we discussed how the research can influence and benefit Women of Color. I also sought ideas about how the study's findings should be shared in and outside of the campus community. In our conversation, participants shared how they understood the concept of intersectionality that emerged in their stories. The final sista circle was also an opportunity to challenge power dynamics in the research process by inviting participants to engage in it.

Presenting and Discussing the Findings

In Chapter 4, I first provide an introduction of each participant. I then present cross-narrative themes, supported by evidence from the data. Finally, in Chapter 5 I interpret the findings through the lens of intersectionality and Mestiza consciousness. This format allowed me to answer the research questions and ascribe meaning to the data and interrogate how power influences and shapes the experiences of the Women of Color who participated in the study (Collins, 2015). I used intersectionality as "(1) an approach to understanding human life and behavior rooted in the experiences and struggles of disenfranchised people; and (2) an important tool linking theory with practice that can aid in the empowerment of communities and individuals." (Collins & Blige, 2016, p. 36). I draw on Crenshaw's (1991) intersectionality framework that I discussed in Chapter 2. Finally, by using cultural intuition to analyze the data, I realized the centrality of Mestiza

consciousness. Like with intersectionality, this concept helped me make meaning of the findings, which I discuss further in Chapter 5.

Positionality

Although I presented my "genealogy of empowerment" in Chapter 1, I will summarize my positionality in this section. As a Woman of Color, and more specifically a mixed-race, light-skinned Puerto Rican woman, I believe race, ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality are salient components of my daily life. My interest in conducting this research in part stems from my own experiences as an undergraduate student and practitioner who participated in and supported the efforts and experiences of Women of Color. Because of this, I seek space and community with other Women of Color and advocate for undergraduate women in these processes. My agenda for this study is to advance equitable treatment of Women of Color undergraduate students.

As a previous practitioner in student affairs, including at the University of Missouri, I have an insider position and understanding of how the institution functions and a rapport established with the community. I used this insider knowledge to explain and describe some of the study site section of this paper. Although I do not know all of the participants in the study, because of my previous connection to the identity centers on campus, participants may trust me in a way that they would not trust a complete outsider. Additionally, my position as a scholar-practitioner guides my research with the intent to inform practice and resistance struggles at institutions, particularly those with a long-standing legacy of exclusion and discrimination.

Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness is crucial within narrative research (Loh, 2013). This has been the case for qualitative research generally speaking, however, perhaps even more so for telling stories that some readers may not perceive as "valid." Although there are criteria that have been widely accepted by the qualitative research community that demonstrate trustworthiness (e.g., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), researchers examining and analyzing stories should think beyond this list (Loh, 2013).

One of the strategies to establish trustworthiness for narrative research is verisimilitude (i.e., quality of if something is true or real (Loh, 2013). In essence, how true or real is the story that a participant conveys to the researcher? Questioning the quality of someone's stories creates power dynamics within research implementation and execution. Power arises when the researcher is the authority on discerning the truth in someone's story, instead of attempting to provide a full and complex story as the participant tells it. As opposed to examining the "quality of the story," I emphasized the necessity for *richness*. A story that is richer in detail and explores aligned and conflicting perspectives and dimensions is important in the research process, and part of my responsibility as a researcher is to elicit these nuances with the participant.

Identifying one's positionality within research is important; however, it is necessary to carry one's positionality throughout the research and not simply introduce it as a reflective statement that should absolve an individual of their bias (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Gardner et al., 2017). Therefore, for the entirety of this research project, from its inception, execution, and to completion, I have utilized a research

journal to process my ideas and thoughts and to dialogue with myself about the development of the project (Russell & Kelly, 2002; Wolgemuth, 2014). Journaling throughout the research process is an opportunity to work through bias (Ortlipp, 2008). It has also allowed me to explore the tensions of conducting research in a way that serves the community of study and do so in a more ethical and collaborative way. This process supports the confirmability of my findings.

In order to address the credibility of the research, I used multiple data collection strategies to support data triangulation (Anfara et al., 2002), which included pláticas, testimonios, and sista circles. I also conducted "member checks" throughout. There are different types of member checks (Loh, 2013). For this research, I conducted member checks in-person and via Zoom to best understand what participants shared and to affirm that my analysis of their narratives was accurate. Each participant received transcripts of their interviews and sista circles to confirm. Additionally, I participant member checked their individual narratives and my preliminary analysis of their narrative. We then met for a final sista circles to discuss analysis of meta-themes and how their narratives were interpreted alongside one another. For me, ensuring trustworthiness was about the scholarly integrity of the research, which included the integrity of the process and outcomes for participants. Therefore, I was diligent about executing the research in a way that was not exploitative. This meant confirming with participants at many stages throughout the research.

In order for readers to feel confident that the findings are transferrable to other contexts, I provided a detailed description of the research process, which supports the dependability of the findings (Merriam, 1998). It ensures that readers understand all steps

and execution of methods and analysis in the research process, which is critical towards establishing trustworthiness. The next section presents the limitation of the study.

Limitations

Reflecting and interrogating the limitations of this research allows me to challenge perceived limitations, while naming potential ones. First and foremost, when collecting narrative or experiential data can be trying when the researcher is unsure if the narrative is a "truthful" depiction (Loh, 2013). I, however, am not in search of a sole truth, but rather an understanding of how Women of Color perceive and understand their experiences in order to derive meaning that can be useful to researchers, practitioners, and students. Researchers have employed "internal consistency" to demonstrate that what participants have said aligns throughout the narrative; however, the experiences students present in this research are not so simplistic nor linear. It is possible that they have conflicting perspectives, ideas, behaviors, and views, even about their own experience. Therefore, in this case, I elicited detail that provided a fuller picture of what participants articulated, as opposed to discounting conflicting recollections or perspectives.

The next limitation is in relation to my own experiences as a practitioner in the field, specifically at the institution where the research is conducted. Although my own positioning to the institution can be understood as having an insider knowledge, it can also limit my ability to explore particular areas and phenomena that might have become commonplace or taken for granted to me over time. I attempted to use my research journal to engage these issues and think critically about my position. Participants may have not shared enough detail because they perceive that we have a mutual understanding because of my perceived "insider" status to the University and as a Woman of Color.

Having an insider position does not "guarantee knowing, or 'better' knowing" (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006, p. 40); therefore, although I have exercised reflexivity in this process, it is possible that I have made missteps and oversights.

Participants may have been more specific in their narratives than they might be with a complete outsider, especially someone who is not a Woman of Color. Women of Color may share stories and experiences with me because they perceive me as someone who can be trusted or with whom they feel a kinship. I remained conscious and cautious of this as I mentioned in the trustworthiness section. I used "heightened awareness" (Hull, 2017) by exercising reflexivity in the research process, which caused a level of protection of participants' stories and experiences, atypical of other research processes. I am particularly sensitive to the reality that research about Women of Color's experiences has been conducted in unethical and harmful ways (Chai, 1985; Mihesuah, 1996), which leads me to exercise care about participants' stories. I am aware that they may convey details about their lives that they did not intend to because of our shared identities and affiliations. Because of this, I wanted to be sure that they are not sharing simply because of our similarities. Their participation in the analytic process allowed me to confirm the elements of their narratives that they were comfortable sharing, rather than asserting my own meaning without their engagement as a valued member of the research process.

Finally, the participants in this study all have their own genealogies of empowerment. Their experience of how they understand their identities, experience their specific campus environment, coalition-build, and experience other life dynamics should not be taken as representative of all Women of Color. Although qualitative research is not meant to be generalizable, I re-emphasize this point because Women of Colors'

experiences have been too often been essentialized and/or mis-represented (Chai, 1985; Mihesuah, 2003).

Summary

The tradition of narrative inquiry informed my critical race feminist epistemological stance, which acknowledges the importance of research that is critical, challenges oppression, and honors the consciousness and experiences of Women of Color. I use the methods of testimonios, pláticas, and sista circles to accomplish this. Through these data collection methods, I worked with participants to present and draw meaning from their narratives. The design of this research allowed me to explore and draw a collective meaning of their shared experiences. Additionally, the methods I employed challenged "traditional" notions of research, including an intention to shift power dynamics between the researcher (me) and the participants. This was particularly important to me, as research processes have not always considered the needs of marginalized communities (Chai, 1985; Collins, 2002; Mihesuah, 2003; Strand et al., 2003; Story et al., 2010). Understanding how Women of Color participated in advancing agendas of justice at a predominantly White and historically masculine institution is central to this research. Alongside this, I explored how these processes were operationalized in the lives of the Women of Color participating in this study, how they collaborated with others, what has informed these strategies, and how their needs and issues were met and addressed.

Guided by my cultural intuition, I used open coding to analyze the narratives, followed by multiple iterations of code mapping and theme to eventually create a thematic meta-narrative. To enhance trustworthiness, I attempted to confront bias and

utilized strategies to make the study more credible and dependable. This design was ideal to explore how Women of Color experienced their community[ies] and engaged in activism and advocacy. Their participation strengthened this study and allowed for a deeper understanding of how power is mechanized and cultivated.

Chapter 4:

Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings that honor the voices of the individual women within this study. At the same time, I draw connections among their stories to demonstrate how power structures operate within their experiences. I begin this chapter with introductions of each participant. I then identify the threads that connect the participants' experiences and stories. These stories are layered, sometimes overlap, and multiple meanings can be excavated from them. Thus, as I present each theme, I define it and support it with the experiences of the participants.

Introductions

Participants engaged in varying forms of activism and advocacy that included: attempting to increase access for Women of Color into predominantly White groups/academic programs/general campus, educating and creating awareness about systems of oppression and campus inequity through formal and informal efforts, participating in and creating self-preservation spaces, mentoring and guiding peers who experienced marginalization, infiltrating spaces that have historically excluded them, and being themselves [existing] in an environment that both asked and forced them to alter or diminish themselves.

To introduce the women in this study, I rely on their testimonios, our pláticas, and sista circles to inform a short summary of each woman's experiences. I focus on several key elements of their experiences: their upbringing, spark for activism and social justice, personalities, and some of the dominant elements of their narratives. I do this to acknowledge the uniqueness and individuality of each woman. I do not provide many

examples in the introductions, as the threads that follow add texture that the summaries alone do not.

This approach to introducing participants is similar to the dissertation work of Cueva (2013), although she had participants introduce themselves through short descriptions presented to the reader in first-person format. Not only will readers have an introduction to the participants, these summaries provide a richer understanding of how the University of Missouri's framing of equity and inclusion often negatively influences the mental and emotional well-being of participants. In so doing, I highlight some of the ways oppressive structures and people have caused them harm, from which they are "healing." We begin here.

Dope

In addition to her identities as a Black woman and her observations of injustice throughout her life, education was a central dimension of Dope's arrival and commitment to issues of justice. Growing up in a city in Missouri, Dope attended schools that were predominantly Black, through which she quickly learned the realities of inequity in education. As an elementary school student, Dope and her peers mobilized to advocate against violence toward students in the school, mainly perpetrated by administrators and teachers who sought to silence their experiences and perspectives. Years removed, she now understands this as one of her first efforts of activism, recalling that those early childhood experiences were ones of defiance and disruption. Through her growing consciousness, Dope discovered that her conceptualization of activism further evolved through her experiences at Mizzou. Upon first arriving at the university at a time when

the campus had been experiencing significant unrest, she mimicked the activism she witnessed around her.

Dope has since realized that she can channel her desire for change into other modes. She is constantly on a quest for knowledge. She also recognizes that systemic oppression forced her mother to make sacrifices in order to provide Dope the space and opportunity to learn about the issues that she seldom discussed with her family.

As we engaged in plática, it appeared that Dope was reaching a place in her social change work where she was grappling with her sense of responsibility to make change. She was also struggling with feelings of exhaustion from the slow pace in which change occurs, if at all. She expressed frustration that her efforts on campus were not amounting to the actual change she had sought. She began to de-prioritize her own well-being. Her work on campus largely centered the interests of others, even as she struggled navigating a campus that excluded her. She reflected on the need for "healing," but described how the larger campus did not cultivate messages of self-care and well-being. She, however, came to learn that prioritizing her needs is necessary in this fight.

At the same time, Dope was unapologetic about vocalizing her frustration with injustice, and navigated this differently based on the setting and people involved. Although some might perceive her as self-assured and blunt, and she most definitely can be, Dope is also sensitive. She described an awareness of others' pain and used her own marginalization as a touchstone for understanding the oppression of others. Connecting to this sensibility made her thoughtful, strategic, and active in equity efforts.

Jasmine

Jasmine grew up in a predominantly White, small, rural town in Missouri. Growing up in this town shaped her experience and understanding of injustice, particularly as a queer mixed race-Latina. Jasmine observed how police in her community surveilled Black and Brown people. She did not see herself represented in the media, nor in books, nor in discussions she had in class. As such, she grew up without role models and did not witness others become critically conscious. At a young age, Jasmine surrounded herself with those who could understand her and with whom she could connect. Because she was one of the only Latinas in her community, she had few Latinx friends. Instead, she developed friendships with Black peers because she could connect with them through their common experiences of racism and isolation. In her K-12 schooling, she navigated classroom spaces where her identity and the history of her Latinx community were non-existent and she quickly learned the reality of xenophobia. For example, she recalled in plática a time when her peers vocalized their disdain for immigrants, about which the teacher did nothing. As a result, she silenced her perspectives on these issues and learned not to draw attention to her ethnic identity. She learned to show up inauthentically for the sake of survival and out of fear. This, however, was not the case with her queer identity, which she described as not being an issue in her rural community.

Upon leaving her small town, Jasmine began to reflect and think more critically about the world. Although some may perceive her as gentle and timid, Jasmine is observant of her surroundings and those with whom she interacts. Being at the university in a larger community than that of her rural upbringing, she witnessed many more social

justice issues and eventually learned the language and concepts to understand them. She evolved during her time at Mizzou, at first not knowing how to articulate her experience or that of others. She soon developed her critical consciousness through involvement and participation in campus social justice centers, student organizations, and participation in campus events and protests. Although these spaces allowed her to engage dimensions of activism and advocacy, she also struggled within them. She experienced othering, elitism, and minimization of the multiplicity of her identities. She also learned to navigate the complexity of solidarity. Ultimately, Jasmine found power in re-defining her activism on her own terms, validating herself, and choosing to show up more authentically in the face of power relations that seek to hinder her.

Mala

As a Latina who grew up low-income, Mala was astute to the racial and economic disparities she experienced and observed growing up. She described racial marginalization and economic disparity as interconnected and at the root of what she had and did not have access to. She articulated the differences between her neighborhood and White middle-class neighborhoods that had freshly paved sidewalks, parks, clean landscapes, gates, gardens, and better school systems.

Mala spent some of her upbringing outside the state of Missouri, which instilled in Mala an appreciation of the access she had to her culture in a way that other Latinx peers who lived in Missouri did not. She explained that “geography matters” and you can be “stripped” of your culture because of where you live. The community she grew up in was instrumental in allowing her to identify issues of injustice, while also providing the ability to grow in and embrace her identities.

Mala observed how White teachers taught in her school, noting they largely came from outside her community and had little to no cultural awareness. For instance, her teachers told her parents they should not speak Spanish to her at home so that her English could improve. From childhood, at school and at home, people asked Mala to take on additional labor. For example, she supported peers as a translator in schools where teachers were not assisting immigrant children; she also wanted to support her mother by helping her with her cleaning business. Although her parents affirmed the strength in her Chicana identity, they also encouraged her not to draw attention to herself. Due to their own undocumented status, it was too risky for them to report and hold teachers accountable when they were racist against Mala in the classroom.

Mala described her activism as a form of service and she seldom centers herself. She learned about what this meant in practice from the "OGs" in her community who described using their privilege in service of others, risking their lives for racial equity efforts, and establishing intentions in social justice work so that it does not become performative.

Like her experiences before college, Mala continued to engage in educational and emotional labor on campus. She initially became involved on campus in social justice spaces (mainly race-based), believing it was what she was supposed to do. She struggled, however, in a community where she felt "cultural deprivation." In her experience, her identities as a first-generation, low-income, Latina to immigrant parents meant that she was not welcome to fully engage in campus spaces. She was sometimes afraid to advocate for herself and others, particularly in class. She was worried that professors would have an unfavorable perception of her and may retaliate against her if she were to

address racism or xenophobia. Nonetheless, Mala was fierce and, like Dope, unapologetic. Although she felt pressure to be involved on campus, she later realized that serving the campus did not bring her joy and any changes she was able to make for campus would not be long-lasting. Thus, Mala began to re-define her advocacy and chose to serve her community rather than the campus. Mala was not going to allow anyone to control her, and especially not an institutional culture that failed to consider her needs.

Payal

Payal reflected on her childhood and marked it as the beginning of her consciousness, especially about the role patriarchy played in her home. This fueled her desire to advocate for marginalized and underserved communities. Additionally, she described that in her K-12 experience as a South Asian girl, the model-minority myth had a significant impact on the expectations teachers and peers had of her. Not only did she ingest this stereotype through schooling experiences and media, but her parents had also internalized the myth and raised her to believe it.

Growing up, Payal's teachers hardly ever intervened regarding racist matters in class and when they did, it was inadequate. Payal learned to "just deal with it" and persist. This led her to internalize her own self-hatred. Payal also witnessed her father verbally and physically abuse her mother. Although she was passionate about addressing issues of violence because of witnessing and experiencing this, she found little opportunity to engage in this kind of activism.

As she reflected on her collegiate experience, she noted that being at the university allowed her to expand her consciousness that was previously limited by growing up in a White middle-class area and attending all-White schools. On a few

occasions within our pláticas, Payal described injustice as a global issue, which was unique among the participants.

Payal's activist and advocacy labor often came in the form of educating others and helping them understand issues of oppression both in and out of the classroom. These experiences, however, were emotional; people often treated her as if she was invisible, and others discounted her perspectives. She worked to challenge stereotypes against her, to resist these forms of marginalization, and intentionally created space for Brown women to talk about the experience of being a racially-gendered person, even when [people or structures] pressured her not to. She prioritized increasing her consciousness so that she could be more effective within her community. She sometimes interacted with those who had privileged identities that she did not, with caution. Like other participants, she was unapologetic about pushing back on the oppressive ideologies and actions of those within the community, particularly peers and administrators. She challenged administrators directly and encouraged peers to consider how their behavior and ideologies could be oppressive to others. Eventually, like Mala, Payal decided to begin to shift her focus from educating those in the campus community to supporting those in the local community.

Sehar

Throughout our pláticas, Sehar demonstrated a clear understanding of herself as a racially-gendered person whose identities could not be separated. Although she did not have many opportunities to critically think about her experiences prior to college, Sehar's childhood exemplified how race, ethnicity, and gender were particularly salient for her. Growing up, she attended schools that were predominantly White or centered Whiteness.

She described that White people appropriated her Brownness and culture for entertainment purposes, which, at times, led Sehar to assimilate as a tool to survive. Because she experienced White people othering her racial and ethnic identity, she concealed her religious identity because of additional concerns that she would be othered for this as well.

Advocacy for Sehar began in her childhood home. She observed patriarchal dynamics in her family, witnessing her father abuse her mother mentally and emotionally. She also witnessed gendered abuse between other family members. She became critical, vocal, and sometimes would intervene so that her father would back off from abusing her mother. She recalled asking many questions as a child and challenging both of her parents' perspectives. Similar to other participants, Sehar had difficulty remembering particular experiences, or had "block[ed] a lot of stuff out," as a result of witnessing and experiencing trauma.

Sehar entered college with a consciousness she was eager to explore, especially as it related to gender. Unfortunately, when she tried to do so, the campus spaces designed for women centered Whiteness, the ethnic based space she engaged in centered men, and both spaces othered her. This was especially true during the early years of her college career.

Sehar was eager to learn and was passionate about conversations that sought to address, confront, and examine systems of oppression. In her activism and advocacy, she largely worked to support others and took a collaborative approach to addressing campus issues through her work in various student organizations.. When talking with administrators about campus issues, she sought the perspectives of everyone with whom

she worked and was always conscious of how others experienced marginalization differently from her.

Sehar was a fighter. She often engaged in advocacy, trying to educate others and make them aware of oppressive dynamics and how their behavior or speech was problematic. She resisted against the racialized and gendered perceptions others had of her. She struggled to be authentic in the various spaces she occupied, often feeling like an outsider even in spaces where she intended to focus on self-preservation. She recognized the importance of healing, but rarely found space to engage in this kind of work as part of her social justice efforts. She realized later in her college career how significant it was and began to re-frame her understanding of activism from educating others to serving Women of Color and working toward solidarity among People of Color.

Illuminating the Themes Between

Within the subsequent sections, I provide themes that connect the stories of participants. These themes illuminate larger issues that marginalized, excluded, and de-centered these Women of Color in their activist work and illustrate how they contended with marginalization and sought to empower themselves. Collectively, the themes demonstrate that in exclusionary, oppressive, and hostile environments, Women of Color still find ways to prioritize themselves and their communities. I begin each theme, and in some cases sub-theme, by providing a brief explanation of how that theme is connected to the experiences of participants. Within each theme, I share excerpts from participants' experiences. The major themes, some of which include sub-themes are: *Engaging and Adjusting Behavior*, *Culture of Exploitation*, *Distrust Confirmed and Cultivated*, and

Developing a Mestiza Consciousness. I begin by exploring the theme *Engaging and Adjusting Behavior*.

Engaging and Adjusting Behavior

This theme and sub-themes reveal how those with privilege and oppressive structures forced participants to either engage as an advocate based on dominant ideologies, representation, or context of a particular environment or setting or adjust their behavior. Participants regularly engaged with others who held dominant identities and centered themselves. These interactions prompted participants to either speak out against oppressive dynamics, or approach issues and behavior strategically. At the same time, they had to be mindful of their feelings and be careful how they might respond. Participants also adjusted their behavior by challenging race-gender perceptions others may have of them. The sub-themes that comprise this larger theme are: *It's Always About White People*, *Caution with Feelings and Emotional Needs of Those with Dominant Identities*, and *Pressure to Resist Race-Gender Perceptions.*

It's Always About White People

Even in classroom or co-curricular spaces designed to address social issues, White people often centered themselves in the dialogue in a way that alienated or silenced the experiences of participants. With that knowledge, Sehar intentionally chose electives in Women's and Gender Studies that were taught by Women of Color professors to avoid faculty who would confront her with White-washed content. She saw this as a way to grow in her consciousness as an advocate and further understand issues that were "not just like White people [course content] but that "prioritized race in all discussions" (P1, 1206-1209).

Although she explained that faculty who are Women of Color do a better job of supporting the evolution of her consciousness, are more authentic, and create more connections for her, her narratives also demonstrate that the professor alone could not completely prevent the centering of Whiteness. During a Sista Circle, she recalled a class she took with a professor who is an Indian woman. When the professor included content about women in India, White peers received the content differently than the content that focused on White women. As she watched a documentary about the sterilization of women in India, she said "at the end of it I was appalled right. I'm frustrated. I'm like 'what the fuck,' like no one had any reaction. Like there's literally, no one…you can feel in the room no one gives a fuck" (SC1, 832-834). Sehar then described how White women were "appalled" by a documentary about the experiences of White women. Dope responded, "they were probably in that bitch crying." Mala laughed at Dope's remarks, confirming that "they were literally." These reactions reflected how commonplace it was for them to witness White women centering themselves and their issues in dialogues.

Sehar then described how she watched her instructor enduring how "these White people just don't give a fuck…and like in that entire class, I would always like call shit out" (SC1, 860-861). Not only was Sehar subjected to the lack of regard by White women peers, but she was also witness to a woman in her community experiencing the same thing. She felt this additional responsibility not only to advocate in class to support her professor, but also for her own well-being. She echoed this in plática explaining how she wanted to "be home for them [her Women of Color professors]," too. In these instances, the situation forced her to be what she referred to as "the killjoy" and "the one that like everyone hates in the room, who's always being like 'uh but'" (SC1, 471-

472). In this plática, Sehar drew from Sara Ahmed's (2016; 2019) work on being a feminist killjoy, recalling that a killjoy is someone who is read as frustrated, angry, and/or disruptive to harmony or union. For Sehar, she sought a life better than what currently existed for her. She was comfortable in the discomfort of being held accountable and corrected. This, however, was something that she realized others are not as not as comfortable with, even those invested in social justice; hence, she embraced being the killjoy in multiple spaces.

Similarly, Jasmine described the lack of self-awareness White women have about how they center themselves in discussions. Jasmine recalled a workshop she co-facilitated as part of her work on campus. The workshop focused on the experiences of Queer and Trans People of Color; however, most of the group were White women. She said,

> So, I was expecting queer people of color, but no…it was just all the White sorority girls and I was like oh. It kind of threw me off and I felt like I couldn't really present the way I would have in front of other people…It was a very White feminist discussion, so very one sided…It's so hard to describe. It was just like situations that I would never be in (P1, 1493-1496).

As a Queer Latina, Jasmine's experiences with discrimination and injustice vary from that of White women, because of her racial and sexual identities. Based on the topic of the workshop, White women felt compelled to attend, but Jasmine described how they were not conscious of how much space they took up once they were there. This inhibited Jasmine's ability to be authentic, and also shifted the focus of the work from Queer and Trans People of Color to White women.

Other women, such as Payal, highlighted how the student groups she participated in centered Whiteness. In these intellectual advocacy spaces, White people resisted Payal for not ascribing to understanding race and racism through a Black-White paradigm. She explained,

> if someone says something and they're Black, like it's 100% like that is a true experience. We're not going to second guess it. Like, let's take that, let's learn from it. Let's use that in our dialogues so we can create conversation and stuff, whereas if I were to say something, it would be validated by some [South Asian or South Asian women]. (P2, 623-627)

She continued, "…I have been told before that I need to talk about things that are more relatable…that I talk about things that people can't relate to" (P2, 645-646).

In this interracial space, the development of students' consciousness centered the awareness of White students in a way that they could easily understand.

Payal stated, "I have noticed sometimes in spaces that, when it comes to addressing race, there are restrictions on who can speak up about it" (P2, 536-537). Participants described that what benefits the consciousness and understanding of White people, not People of Color, dictates who can legitimately speak. This exploits the Black experience, as White individuals and perspectives determine what will be easily consumed and "used" to justify the reality of racism on campus. When Payal challenged the status quo that centered only Whiteness, the group silenced her because she is a South Asian woman. They prevented her from authentically engaging intellectually because of the need to create understanding and awareness for White people.

Being Cautious With Others' Feelings and Emotional Needs

Similar to centering Whiteness, participants discussed how the fragility/ego of those with dominant identities forced them to address conversations around social justice in a delicate manner. They also expressed that those with dominant or privileged identities center their feelings. The privileged weaponized their feelings to force participants into engaging in advocacy that was easily digestible and on their terms.

Sehar explained that advocating with White people required educating them and that this was exhausting. Their fragility forced her to prioritize their emotions instead of her own. She shared, "when you point out a mistake, it's about them, not about the mistake. They want to make it about them." (SC2, 761-762). She continued, "you [White people] cared more about how you felt, than you cared about how the people who are experiencing injustice felt" (SC2, 832-833). Because of experiences like this, Sehar could not be as "direct" as she wanted to be in these teaching moments. It "takes me a lot of energy" (SC2, 787). She expounded, "if I had agency, I'm the person, my personality is straightforward…I expect people to be straightforward with me and I don't expect them to coddle me if they're calling me [out/in]" (SC2, 808-810). She described that White people have to be "massaged into learning" (SC2, 814). The combination of the dominance and fragility of White people forced her to do excess emotional and mental labor to be effective in her activism.

Payal also expressed that the combination of the dominance and fragility of White people and men forced her to water down her experience and monitor her emotions when helping them understand oppression in her communities. To be effective, she took great care when she engaged in consciousness-raising activities, saying,

> It's not that I won't share my experience, it's just I won't share it 100% because it's like putting it in doesn't almost…like taking an addict off their drug, you know, like, we're going to take you down in increments, not just cut it cold turkey. (P1, 1934-1937)

This was particularly true when engaging with White folks, as Payal explained,

> I can't go full throttle for some things because I gotta represent the org, I gotta watch out for this White fragility, but I also got to engage these people in a conversation so they don't get shut down and won't want to engage later and like all of those factors that have to be considered especially on a predominately White campus. (SC2, 1684-1687)

Payal pointed out that if the racial and ethnic representation on campus were greater, she might be able to be more direct because she would have "other people in this space that can support my statement" (SC2, 1711). Even in interracial spaces that included White people who were more aware of racism centered Whiteness and White fragility, Payal considered their emotions and how her reactions might trigger them.

Like others, Dope used strategy when challenging oppressive ideologies. She carefully navigated altering her behavior to ensure others would be receptive by simply being direct. Dope described herself as a bridge to consciousness, sharing "I can't be the same person because I have different audiences" (SC1, 1438). For example, she might prepare for her interactions with White people, "writ[ing] it down in my notes, and I like literally do a outline of what I'm gonna touch on" (SC1, 1459-1460). She continued,

> I write notes because like, because they're fragile and if I like go off the dome and challenge them, I'm going to cuss them out like, and so I don't. I want the delivery

> to be intentional like, I'm entering these spaces on purpose for a reason. And so I can't cuss y'all out loud at every meeting. I can cuss you out maybe twice a week (SC1, 1485-1488).

Dope focused on the end goal of creating change, which required her to be aware of White people's fragility on issues of justice. She explained that she wrestles with this internal conflict saying, "it's always that pick and choose battle of wanting to preserve your energy, but also wanting to say something" (S1, 427-428).

Dope explained that even when some White people in a group are open to change, she still acted with caution because of others' fragility, or simply because she is underrepresented. She stated,

> White people I know, who know that things are fucked up. But like, they just don't know what to do or where to start. And, or it's like, they don't want to speak for me, or like speak over me. So they want to give me the opportunity to speak, you know, about me and my experiences and stuff. But then it's also like, I'm the only one in the room. So, it's kinda like a expectation, like, who, what else Black person's going to talk about being Black besides the one Black person in the room? (SC1, 280-285).

As she exclaimed "the energy don't be there to discuss [issues of justice and equity]." She did reference one instance where White peers did speak up. This experience demonstrated for Dope that when White people are aware and follow their awareness with action, they can lessen the mental and emotional energy that individuals like Dope expend.

Despite the hard work of being in certain spaces, Payal explained that if she were not there, her perspective may be missing from that space.

> There are certain spaces that are very difficult to [disengage from] because I am the only person of Color. I am the only South Asian woman. I am the only like, person from that experience, or that identity that can speak or people look to for feedback. So it's like, Okay, do I stay? Do I go? Because there's the one side where it's like, I'm supplementing the missing gap (SC1, 1006-1010).

This pressure became burdensome for Payal, as the structural issues that limited representation on campus forced her to participate in efforts that were draining. She experienced dissonance, realizing her need to advocate and, at the same time, people were exploiting her; they did not honor her needs, knowledge, or allow her to show up fully as herself.

Unlike in predominantly White spaces, Dope found that she could be her unapologetic self in Black spaces. Dope was very candid. Discussing a time when she challenged homophobia,

> [they] don't make me nervous…like, you want people to respect you, because of this identity you hold, but you don't give a fuck about anybody else's because it's not salient to you, when we like literally have Black queer people in this room right now. And you're like, just like blatantly disrespecting them. (SC1, 1464-1467)

In this example, she used Black people's own position to hold them accountable. Whereas in most White spaces, she could not connect with them to develop a relationship because they did not have a shared experience of racism and minoritization.

Much like how participants negotiated White spaces, they also approached spaces with Brown men in their communities strategically (T2). For example, Sehar described remaining calm when Brown men in her community were being sexist. To be effective in her advocacy, required her to be strategic and intentional in how she delivered her message. “Because if you’re like too much, they’re going to perceive you as…like emotional…they already see you as a threat and like that feminist” (P1, 1599-1602). She expanded on this, sharing “when you're even talking to Brown people or whatever, Brown men especially. Like you have to, you really have to make sure you're not emotional” (SC1, 1614-1617). She described a strategy similar to the one Dope used in predominantly White spaces. She shared, “So I don’t get emotional, I need to write it down…really just controlling your emotions, because they already think you’re emotionally fucked up” (SC1, 1719-1721). Thus, as she engages with men in her community, their dominance and depreciative stereotypes of women force her to behave on their terms.

Payal described how men in her community sometimes demonstrated “resistance and shutting down” (P1, 1879). Because Payal wanted an actionable outcome by working with these men, she changed her behavior. She did not want them to perceive her as being overly-emotional and “hysterical” (P2, 111). She highlighted a time when men perceived her as such. She addressed ableist comments made by a South Asian man in a meeting. “[H]e was like, ‘well, I think you're just blowing this out of proportion.’ And I was like, ‘okay, see, your resistance now is blowing this out of proportion’” (P1, 1995-2000). She realized he was uncomfortable with being held accountable. His resistance constrained her and she realized that she needed to navigate cautiously if she was to achieve her

intended goal: to help others understand how their language and actions can oppress others.

In essence, lack of representation in certain spaces, coupled with the lack of consciousness about issues of social justice among those with dominant identities, compelled or even forced these advocates and activist women to engage and participate in interactions that were burdensome. Often, despite, or even because of, their strategic actions, participants found themselves mentally, emotionally, and even physically drained. This kind of pressure to adjust their behavior is further explored in the next section, as participants seek to resist race-gender perceptions.

Pressure to Resist Race-gender Perceptions

As Women of Color, in addition to navigating spaces that center those with dominant identities, such as in classrooms and co-curricular activities, they were hyper-aware that people would perceive their advocacy through a racist-sexist lens. They recognized that perceptions rooted in racialized-gendered stereotypes not only inform how others interpreted their behavior and presence, but also how they responded to it. At times, they attempted to challenge these perceptions to meet their intended activist goals. At other times, they restrained themselves because they were fearful of people labeling them based on racist-sexist stereotypes.

In her interactions with White men administrators, Sehar challenged perceptions they had of her as a docile South Asian woman.

> I don't smile in a room with administrators …I'd rather you think I'm a bitch then to like, take me not serious…I enter a room I don't, I'm not like a commanding presence in a room until I start talking…I'm not going to make jokes with you if

> I'm talking about issues that are affecting marginalized communities, if you have power in that space…And like especially because I don't have credibility when people look at me (P1, 929-935).

In Sista Circle, she expanded on these interactions and how she wants to challenge these stereotypes about Asian women being "passive" and "easy" (SC1, 1254). She recognized the power dynamics in rooms filled with White cis-men administrators. She responded to this imbalance of power by being "purposeful" in her interactions and combating the racist-sexist expectations they may have of her. Although she does this as a strategy of resistance, she explained, "that takes a toll, being so hard faced and not wanting to laugh and just be yourself. I'm just chill…I'm not upset all the time…I joke around most of the time, maybe I'm not always funny, but (laughs)" (SC1, 1258-1262). The pressure to resist these perceptions challenged Sehar's well-being and sense of self.

Mala articulated a fear of fitting a stereotype when she experienced or observed others' problematic behaviors. Although the behaviors make her angry, these racialized-gendered perceptions of her force her to be conscious of not appearing too angry. She said,

> I think that's just because I have so much anger sometimes. And not necessarily from that one thing that I feel, because there's so many instances throughout the, literally throughout the day (SC1, 1093-1098)…I literally fit the stereotype of the angry Latina. And that's why, it's become something so hypersensitive for me, because I don't want to fit that stereotype, but at the same time, like, fuck you and your stereotyping. I'm angry (SC1, 1114-1117). They're like, "what the fuck is going on." Like you know all scared and shit. Like, it's not even just me, it's like

> multiple women of color that I've seen that in those instances get intense…they get seen as like a threat to society (SC1, 1134-1136).

Even though she acknowledged the emotions she feels, she considers "ton[ing] it down" when she seeks to disrupt problematic actions. This constant vigilance has both mental and physical effects on her—she feels the frustration and anger in her body and is conscious of how others may perceive her as a threat, which informs how she ultimately responds.

Payal underscored how she teetered between being direct and prioritizing the goals she has in relation to her advocacy. For instance, with a White man administrator, who perceived himself and has a reputation on campus as "a woke White man," Payal recalled, "I have to call him out all the time on stuff…he kind of laughs and looks at me. And I'm like, I'm sitting at my desk working like, 'I'm not laughing right now. And you are. So what does that say about you?'" (SC 2, 1382-1385). She partly engaged this way because men believe "she's not serious" (SC 2, 1373) because of the racial-gendered stereotypes they have about her being submissive. Her response then becomes both about holding this administrator accountable, and simultaneously ensuring that he does not discount her based on her race and gender identities.

Culture of Exploitation

The *Culture of Exploitation* theme demonstrates how oppressive structures and people with privilege and power exploited participants' investment in addressing social justice issues on campus. Most of the women were nearing the end of their college careers and expressed feelings of exhaustion and hopelessness about their work on campus. As students grew in their consciousness, they worked in their sphere of influence

in the institution to make change. These efforts were often centered on growing the consciousness of others, creating more diverse spaces, and self-preservation. They expressed that these changes contribute to creating a more diverse or inclusive campus culture; however, they are surface-level and seldom create the transformation needed to create more equitable institutions.

By the time students were close to graduation, they were exhausted and burnt out from their activist and advocacy work and began to disengage as they recognized the lack of commitment from the institution. Then, social justice work is left to younger generations who enter the fight only to confront the same dynamics. Although students often engaged in creating initiatives or spaces, their diversity labor focused on educating and supporting the awareness of others. This effectively placed those with dominant identities at the center of inclusion, diversity, and equity efforts and marginalized students on the periphery. Thus, the institution benefitted from the presence and labor of minority student activists, exploiting their commitment and failing to consider their needs.

Dope illustrated how students come and go, and the larger cultural change she and others are working to create is not happening. She said,

> [students] get cycled out every…it's just a cycle…Like I've said. Like, I can sit here, my four years in university and I can be happy that I know is gonna be [a little change in X organization], I'm happy about that. When I graduate that's not gonna be the fucking case. You know why? Because I know too many Mizzou alum who are P.O.C who have been saying the same exact things that I complain about right now. And they've been saying this for 20 years (SC2, 1772-1780).

Thus, there is little change; she believes the impact she is making is temporary and dependent on the commitment of specific students such as herself. She said, “a lot of spaces on campus, on college campuses, and in just general, we focus on how to teach, like dominant and majority, we focus on how to teach them” (P2, 219-223). She further reiterated this point by saying,

> we focus on teaching people to not [do and say bad things] rather than focusing on healing people who have been hurt and harmed…we focus on, we finna have diversity trainings, it’s finna be two P.O.C.’s walkin’ in and they finna teach y’all diversity…I don’t want to do that.” (P2, 674-678).

Even when Dope saw that her efforts mattered, it was not enough to keep her from feeling defeated. Dope described that the institution does not take accountability for or communicate with students about advancing issues that are significant to supporting Black students. She specifically cited recruiting and retaining Black faculty on campus, developing inclusive curriculum, providing emotional support for marginalized people, and increasing support for students of lower-incomes. Thus, Dope’s actions demonstrated a commitment to justice that was not reciprocated by the institution itself. This, along with little change in her spheres of influence, made her feel as though her time and energy could be better spent elsewhere. She was ready to quit everything and knock on the doors of first year students “who have more longevity” (P2, 495). She expressed that the institution is not invested or interested in her as an individual; to them, she is disposable.

Dope began to acknowledge her own well-being, saying, “I’m at the point where I’m like, I don’t even want to do this shit no more. You know I’m fucking tired. And we

ain't getting no damn where. What we get? A diversity sub-committee, woohoo [Sarcastic]" (P1, 847-849). As Dope pulled away from campus activist work to focus on her needs, she said this "is probably why I'm here for an extra semester, because I've wasted my time" (SC2, 2145). In Dope's case, her commitment resulted in real material outcomes as she delayed her graduation on account of her involvement and investment in inclusion, diversity, and equity, and her consequential mental and emotional exhaustion. Once she realized this, she began to resist upholding a performative diversity culture.

Dope described that she needed to "heal." Sehar articulated a similar sentiment, saying that she had not worked with her communities on healing in the ways that she would have preferred. Regardless of the space Sehar was in, her work was educational (T2). Men, White women, non-South Asian people, administrators, and classmates asked her help in understanding the issues she and others like her experience. T hese efforts leave little room for the kinds of healing work needed, not only within her community, but also for herself. As she has grown in her advocacy, however, she has sought to shift her focus away from campus to her own community, explaining, "I'm just so tired of it. I think there's so much work that has to be done within my community and that's the stuff I'm working on right now, like within communities of color" (P1, 1448-1450). The university *seemed* to begin to prioritize inclusion and equity, which compelled her into exhausting activism from which she was beginning to disengage.

Jasmine emphasized the long-standing traditions that are reflective of the campus culture, and are difficult to change because institutional leaders are reluctant to make the required investment. She described the larger campus community as predominantly White, exclusive, and elite. She recalled, how, in a march during the yearly campus

homecoming demonstration that was intended to shed light on "the exclusion of marginalized students in homecoming festivities" (P1,1870-1871), leadership did not acknowledge their efforts or really listen. She expressed that homecoming is for

> the White students that are in fraternities and sororities…And I think about [how] their families come, and like they've went to Mizzou too, like, it's just like a generational celebration that a lot of marginalized students can't relate to, or even participate in honestly (P1, 1875-1879).

The Chancellor at the time could not understand how this campus tradition excluded marginalized students, stating in a conversation with Jasmine that "homecoming's for everyone." Jasmine explained that she felt exhausted from interactions such as these by saying, "it's so hard to explain to people. People just don't get it. And so you're fighting for something that people don't understand. Sometimes it can just be really frustrating" (P1, 1895-1897). The Chancellor's dismissal and lack of commitment to understand the perspectives of marginalized students was just one example of the institutional leaders' systemic lack of commitment to marginalized students, and therefore, how campus efforts toward equity and inclusion are performative.

Collectively, participants described oppressive ideologies and how those with dominant identities are prioritized, which serves as the foundation of contemporary campus programs, efforts, and culture. Gaslighting by others on campus by expressing performative concern created frustration and exhaustion for participants who desired to change their campus culture, but confronted unreceptive responses. For example, those in the highest positions were unaware that students such as Jasmine perceived the homecoming celebration as a celebration of the exclusive legacy of the institution. As

Jasmine indicated, the homecoming celebration reminded students of Color of the generational legacy of Mizzou; the campus was intended for White, middle to upper class students and it still centers them. Jasmine believed protests and demonstrations that shed light on this reality, “rarely reache[d] higher ups” and that it was “difficult to make change when people don’t care” and “White voices are louder.”

Participants believed that White people were the dominant stakeholders of the institution and were not invested or vocal about addressing racism and exclusion on campus, which is part of the reason these issues remained unaddressed. Payal articulated this in her narrative:

> change is slow because people in power aren’t aware…I realized more and more every day that addressing inequity is very slow, tedious tasks with people who have a lot of privilege and power. It's something that is really like okay, let's take it step by step like we have to draw a diagram and make money maps and all that stuff (P2, 818-820)…the university really doesn't care until it comes to their money, until it comes to their dollar bill (P2, 845).

She highlighted the focus on educating those who are unaware as an important part of activism. However, institutional decision makers will always limit actual change, unless they wholeheartedly invest in dismantling dominant power. As she underscored, without the motivation and action of predominantly White stakeholders, there will not be a monetary investment to change the culture of Mizzou. Thus, efforts made by the institution to create more inclusive campus environments were merely performative and exploited the genuine commitment of students who seek to create a more equitable

community. The free labor that individuals like Payal gave to the community in the form of educational awareness initiatives demonstrated this. She explained,

> Because I feel more often than not there are spaces where I'm like, "oh my God why am I trying to facilitate a conversation on IDE [inclusion, diversity, and equity] and not getting paid for it, one, but two, like, it's a mental thing" (P2, 781-783).

When participants, like Payal, realized the cost of their activist and advocacy labor, they withdrew from that campus labor and redirected efforts into the local community, as opposed to the "Mizzou bubble."

Mala explained that earlier in her college career, her activism and advocacy came in the form of educating and "enlightening" (S2, 1540) those with dominant identities, who presume she is going educate them; "if I'm not going to do it then who is, it's just always expected upon you…to just simply sit there and educate someone" (P1, 199-201). The lack of representation of others like her and understanding of peers, and existing on a campus that marginalizes her contributed to feeling that she had no other choice but to engage in this work. "I gotta be involved in everything. I gotta do everything. I gotta be everywhere. I gotta be with everybody" (S2, 1611-1612). She felt "obligated in some way because I was in certain spaces. I was like, 'oh, you have to do all these things.'" The campus culture defines activism based on involvement, and to be productive and successful citizens in the campus community students should be involved on campus and contribute to the community.

Participants described an institution that is not committed to challenging racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism. As such, being involved on campus can be difficult

for individuals, such as Mala, who are committed to challenging those issues. Also, that the campus community, for the most part, treated her as an outsider, further complicating whether and how to engage in campus activism. Because Mala felt isolated on campus and possessed a great deal of consciousness about her identities, she seldom found space to fully engage. She encountered racism, racist nativism, and "cultural deprivation" (T2, P2 96-100) on campus. Yet, it was this environment and her own personal life experience that pressured her to do more. However, doing more often came in the form of educational and awareness efforts that did not center Mala's many needs, let alone consider the support she may need navigating campus as a first-generation Latina from a low-income background. Similar to Dope, Mala highlighted how the campus community did not meet her needs, yet it simultaneously pressured her to do more. This dynamic was not good for her well-being.

> I felt the pressure to just do more…and it wasn't until now that I realize like damn, you gotta get it together, like you ain't gonna see the finish line if you keep failing these classes because you're doing x, y, and z" (P2, 153-158) and that "this shit's temporary, a lot of shit that I put energy and like time into on campus isn't really doing much for me or other people (S2, 1437-1438).

Thus, the institution exploited the care and commitment she had for university, until she realized that this additional labor was getting in the way of her goal. As a result, she shifted her focus and how she understood her activism. She began to realize that she put trust in an organization that did not have her best interest in mind. This next theme examines more deeply how participants expressed distrust in working with others who had privilege and/or power over them.

Distrust Confirmed and Cultivated

The theme, *Distrust Confirmed and Cultivated,* underscores how participants have a level of distrust of those with privileged identities and positions and how that distrust was cultivated and sustained. Within the subsequent sub-themes, distrust is often demonstrated through participants' perceptions of and interactions with others. Distrust often led participants to adjust how they responded and engaged with those with privilege and power. Participants used strategies of avoidance, disengagement, and/or compartmentalization as acts of self-preservation.

Avoidance and Disengagement

Participants described the lack of trust they had toward those with dominant identities. Largely, this distrust they expressed was rooted in perceptions and/or experiences dealing with individuals who were either men in their ethnic community or White women. It resulted in participants either completely avoiding spaces where the dominant representation was White and/or men, or disengaging from spaces, people, and interactions once the actions of those with dominant identities confirmed their feelings of distrust.

For example, nearly all participants indicated that they did not engage with the Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention (RSVP) Center on campus because it was a predominately White space. This was particularly troubling as all of the women had either experienced or witnessed interpersonal violence. Although Dope had experienced interpersonal violence on campus, she did not feel comfortable accessing the RSVP Center because the space largely served and was represented by White women, who she did not believe could relate to her. She also believed there would be a lack of

understanding of the role of race in her assault; the man who assaulted her was Black and in a historically Black Greek-letter organization. Thus, she kept quiet about the assault. Instead, she, along with other Black women, created their own informal space to engage the topic of assault by Black, elite campus men. Her lack of trust toward White women and White dominant spaces was confirmed by her experiences with the Women's Center on campus. After her third time going to the Women's Center to get resources for an event she was coordinating on the behalf of Black women, she said,

> so I text one of the staff members who works there over the weekend and I'm like yeah, what's up…and she's like yeah, I hit our boss up and she hasn't really responded or anything. And I'm like true" (P1, 1121-1124)

These kinds of interactions reinforced that women, such as Dope, cannot count on doing social justice work with others in spaces that are predominantly led by and serve White women. As a result, she avoided seeking out spaces dominated by White women, even for issues pertinent to her own marginalization.

Jasmine expressed a desire to engage in dialogues about interpersonal violence against women. However, like Dope, she opted out of spaces like the RSVP Center and Women's Center "cuz I know my voice won't be heard" (P1, 1464) because these spaces are dominated by White women. She also mentioned opting out of the LGBTQ Resource Center because it was predominantly White. She reflected that this was, in part, because of her experiences with White people who did not listen to her in White educational spaces and growing up in a predominantly White, rural town. She then "kind of avoided those spaces when I got to Mizzou" (P1, 1477-1478) and that "in the moment it felt like it would be more tiring than an actual safe space or comfortable space for me." Her history

of interacting with those she could not trust, led Jasmine to choose between her mental and emotional well-being and meeting her activist and consciousness needs. She took a risk when joining the psychology club. She explained,

> And it was like, all White people. I don't know. They would just say like, stupid ass things all the time. I ended up not continuing with it. It was a headache. I mean, I just didn't want to like keep saying things. And they just wouldn't stop with the ignorance so I just didn't continue with it anymore (SC 1, 608-611).

Despite her efforts, her experiences with the psychology club reinforced her past experiences of distrust.

Sehar was interested in addressing issues of violence against South Asian women and later Black and Brown women; however, like other participants, she did not engage with efforts and initiatives through the RSVP Center because the space was dominated by White women (T2). She stated,

> [there is] just like this sense of pity and I don't want pity in that conversation, I just want to talk to somebody from the same identity who's had that experience…There's a sense of like we're equals, it's not like a White person listening to this conversation being like "oh, yeah", like trying to relate to it when it doesn't relate, because there's times they'll do that (P2, 1188-1191).

Sehar expanded on this by explaining that in previous experiences with White women, she perceived them to be paternalistic because they assume that Women of Color are at a deficit (T2, P1). She explained that they do not perceive individuals like herself as "resilient," but solely as "suffering."

Participants intentionally considered and discerned extra-curricular activities or spaces of self-preservation on campus. Payal preferred spaces where she would feel "comfortable," have a level of relatability, would not have to compartmentalize aspects of her identity, and would not have to explain perspectives and ideologies that were "common sense" (SC1, 352) to her, but not to White people. She said,

> I've been going my entire life in White spaces…having spaces that are not just White are things that I look for…it's everywhere I go, it's White people, White walls, White everything…I can't deal with it because I feel claustrophobic. I'm put back into emotions and memories that I had from high school and feeling isolated (P1, 2305-2310).

With her agency, Payal choses herself over engagement in spaces that do not serve her or her well-being.

Mala highlighted how she intentionally engaged in spaces on campus that have been largely dominated by "femme leaders" and Women of Color in particular. She mentioned she has struggled to build "healthy relationships" with men because of what she observed in her home life. Although close with her father, she observed what she described as a "machista" culture and that he verbally abused her mother, stating that those "verbal interactions stayed with me all my life" (P1, 1064). Weary of men, the spaces she chose are ones dominated by women.

> I found after reviewing the spaces that I have been in, most of them are not, don't have men included. And if they do it's like a small percentage" and that in these instances where men are present, she is often "doubting" or "correcting" men (P1, 1096-1099).

Thus, in addition to being cautious around men, she was also cautious to avoid spaces where she might be forced to take on the role of an educator. She recalled an interaction where a man in an ethnic-based space "was talking about, he was just sexualizing women and objectifying women, not during the meeting, but right before the meeting" (P1, 1364-1365) and none of the men in the group addressed it. The group consisted predominantly of women, otherwise Mala would not have felt comfortable enough to address the behavior of that man and the silence of the other men, and might have not returned to the group. These experiences further compromised Mala's trust, and also made it difficult to work in solidarity within organizations to advance issues.

Through her experiences, Dope described how people with dominant identities relegated her to the role of educator. This happened in almost all spaces she was a part of, and the burden was particularly prevalent in White spaces, as she emphasized having to "teach" in these spaces. Unfortunately, even in spaces focused on understanding the experiences of Black people, Dope highlighted how the silence of White people cultivated distrust. For example, in her Black studies capstone course, she explained that White students, who comprised a third of the class, barely spoke. She said,

> we talking about racist people, shit. You betta speak the hell up, be reflective, do something, like pour into, contribute…engage, damn. I just feel like y'all just taking notes on me. And y'all finna just go do a research study and publish this book…y'all are literally cramping our style (P2, 907-922).

Dope indicated that even with their pre-existing awareness of these issues because they were in a capstone class, White peers did not "do" anything with their knowledge. She witnessed the misalignment between interest and commitment, further cultivating distrust

in their intentions. At times, pre-existing or cultivated distrust also led participants to compartmentalize themselves. This is discussed further in the next sub-theme.

Compartmentalizing Self

The experiences of participants indicated that the focus on the most dominant identity and/or centering dominant ideologies forced them to compartmentalize their identities, emotions, and the issues they care about. These experiences created disconnection, fostered distrust in spaces where participants could not fully engage, and they physically, mentally, or emotionally withdrew.

Sehar again reflected on experiences she had in White women's spaces at the university where she could not engage her race or ethnicity. Coming to college with consciousness and knowledge about being a Brown woman, and the kinds of violence enacted upon Brown women, Sehar wanted to get involved in the feminist group on campus. However, once she experienced organizations that made her uncomfortable because they excluded Women of Color, she changed her mind.

> I thought Feminist Student Union [FSU] was supposed to be where I was going to find community and home and because issues affect[ing] women were my main thing. Gender issues were important to me but I think I didn't have, I don't think I had the capacity to understand at that level what I was concerned with was the state of Women of Color and not just women. I think I didn't understand that coming in as a freshman. (P1, 1723-1740).

The FSU "exhausted" and frustrated Sehar; she expressed that they were more interested in espousing theoretical concepts like intersectionality than engaging Women of Color. She stated, "where the fuck are the Women of Color?" (P1, 1695). Although she brought

these issues to their attention, she did not observe change within the space. She inevitably left the organization but not before she "told them off." She explained that they had serious work to do as other Women of Color who she knew did not feel included in the space. These other Women of Color often expressed confusion when Sehar opted to participate as a member in the group. The culture of the organization centered Whiteness, which forced Sehar to either compartmentalize her identities or leave.

Participants, like Payal, emphasized the need to disconnect and compartmentalize from her emotions and issues she cared about when dialoguing with Brown men. She knew that crying or engaging her emotions was not useful when talking with Brown men. Payal indicated that she allowed these emotions to build until "the tank needs to refill before it all comes out…I need to get to a point where it's like, okay, this is something that you can cry about" (P2, 153-155). Interactions with White people and men in her ethnic community have taught Payal that emotion is not productive. Many of these interactions forced her to disconnect with her feelings in order to be effective in conveying her points. In other words, she has had to separate herself from her emotions, and she has carried this behavior into her life more generally.

> they (men in her ethnic community) kind of realize it's harmful (using problematic language) but don't want to acknowledge themselves because they don't want to think of themselves in that type of way…like I can't be a harmful person because I'm Brown person, but that's not true. You can be harmful (P2, 112-115).

Men weaponized their own marginalized identities to avoid accountability for being sexist and discounting the experiences of South Asian women. This created an

environment where fully addressing the issue of sexism was impossible, which forced Payal to compartmentalize her needs.

As with other participants, Payal indicated that dominant White representation prevented her engagement in the Women's Center. Because of her experiences with the FSU and belief that the space would not foster other dimensions of Payal's experience and identity, she chose to engage with the Multicultural Center. She shared, "in the Women's Center, I feel like it's just about being a woman. It's just about being a woman. And that's it, there's nothing else that can be had in that conversation" (P1, 2350-2351)…"when you're in the MCC, there's more than just being a woman in that space. Like there's the intersectionality of being a person" (P2, 478-479).

Jasmine also identified spaces where she would avoid certain aspects of her experience and identity. She said she would not feel comfortable engaging conversations about violence against women in the Latinx space on campus. Bringing up the dialogue within the Latinx-based organization "would put a damper on the conversation. And I can't recall a meeting that focused on real issues in a real serious way, especially when it comes to gender identity or dynamics" (P2, 506-508). Additionally, she described the space as being "a very male dominant space" (P2, 496) and that

> the men are just overbearing, aggressive. Doesn't really offer like a safe space for women I feel…I feel comfortable in that space, but I don't, I wouldn't talk about stuff like that, really personal things (P2, 250-253).

The culture of the group created an environment that forced Jasmine to disconnect from discussing not only issues she cares about, but also experiences she has had.

Sehar underscored how understanding racism in the campus Asian Pacific Islander (API) group was also complicated; the group often defaulted to centering the most dominant ethnic identity group within a pan-ethnic space. As a South Asian woman, she often felt like an outsider, regarding both identity and ideologies, in API groups. She echoed the importance of challenging anti-Blackness in these spaces and did this through facilitating workshops on the topic, but did not always perceive her community as being invested in addressing these issues. Additionally, she explained, "we're not seen as Asians necessarily…we have proximity to Whiteness, but East Asians have a different level of proximity to Whiteness," which impacted her engagement in these spaces. She stated, "you feel a little distant all the time…in those spaces it's just like fighting to make space" and often clinging to other Brown people who are also in that space (P2, 1382-1385). The dominant representation relegated issues and experiences of South Asian people to the periphery of these pan-ethnic spaces, and forced Sehar to bend to the interests of the most dominant group within the space.

Similarly, Mala articulated challenges of being fully herself in Latinx spaces. She described the "gatekeeping" of Latinidad and how it made it difficult for her to engage her multiple and varying identities and experiences.

> I'm not in those spaces anymore because of that, but I feel like whenever I'm in those spaces, it's like a competition to see who is most Latinx, who can speak Spanish or who can do this…it's always a competition…who proves their worth more…it irks me when I walk into spaces where people have to prove themselves…why are we putting up a front or a mask? (P2, 51-68).

This frustrated Mala, and although she saw this space as a form of resistance by providing comfort to Latinx people on a predominantly White campus, she also described the challenge of mobilizing around issues because of authenticity politics that forced people to hide aspects of their identities. Ironically, even the Latinx student group on campus made Mala feel as though she must prove her worth and, like in the rest of the spaces on campus, she was forced to wear a "mask."

As we dialogued, Dope described how there was not an opportunity to engage in topics around race relations in a more complex way in an interracial space, something she had a desire to do. This caused her to compartmentalize her own interests when engaging in these dialogues and met this need elsewhere. In an interracial social justice space, she explained, "it's only P.o.C that's talking about racism. And it's like we're talking about it in terms of…we're talking about in terms of like to make sure that the White people are still comfortable enough to listen" (SC1, 1590-1592). Thus, White fragility not only created an environment where she could not engage in the kinds of dialogue that she wanted to engage in, but it also forced her to separate her emotions to effectively engage in any dialogue. White dominance forced Dope, as a Black woman, to be conscious of her emotions and to center Whites in understanding racism and race relations. She referenced finding remedy to these kinds of interactions in spaces like the Multicultural Center or through individual relationships with friends. Similarly, Mala reflected on how course curriculum framed social issues through an uncomplicated Black-White binary racial lens. She explained that there is a "lack of acknowledgement" (P2, 560) of anything outside of this binary. Inevitably, many of these experiences and dynamics appeared to lead participants to developing a new consciousness, which I describe next.

Developing a Mestiza Consciousness

The sub-themes within this section are woven together to illuminate how participants acknowledge and work toward wholeness. Through their experiences, participants often came to embrace or begin the journey of embracing a new consciousness for navigating spaces and power dynamics with informed agency. Thus, framing these threads through this understanding, specifically through Anzaldúa's (1999) chapter on "La Conciencia de La Mestiza," highlighted how the experiences of participants are interconnected. The sub-themes found in this over-arching theme are: *Moving Pluralistic Thinking Forward*, *Healing the Divide: Creating a New Culture*, *Uncovering her True Self,* and *Spirit of Self-Determination Remains.*

Moving Pluralistic Thinking Forward

Participants demonstrated how they moved "from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking…that includes rather than excludes" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 101). The excerpts here provide an understanding as to how participants did just this. Often as they understood that their previous social justice work centered around those with privileged identities and used reason and logic to achieve goals, they began to engage in an activist labor that recognized other ways of challenging oppression. This happened through recognizing how they could empower themselves to show up in spaces and interactions as they met their goal to create more equitable spaces. They did not cease engaging in analytic reasoning about oppression, but they also recognized their lived experience, emotion, and authentic presentation of self as forces that challenged oppression and centered them, their perspectives, and communities.

Participants highlighted how even as they grappled with gender and race perceptions of others, they were vocal in their beliefs and authentically themselves. They indicated that they may meet the educational or emotional needs of those with privileged identities or power over them. They also, however, actively worked to resist them, realizing that they can engage in ways outside of the roles to which others have designated them to.

For Mala, a mental battle ensued as she grappled between fear created by power dynamics and doing what is right and addressing problematic behavior. Inevitably, Mala often chose to speak up and advocate for herself and others who were affected. She said, “I've realized that I'll say whatever I need to say regardless of who is in the room” (S1, 1135-1136). Aware of her oppressed position, she resisted how those with power can regulate and suppress her perspectives with their mere presence, particularly with the possibility of them perceiving her as an “angry Latina.” She challenged power relations, such as in classroom spaces where she disrupted the idea that professors are incapable of making errors or are the only knowledge holders in a space. A Western mode would encourage her to be a passive learner in this environment, Mala however, refused. She specifically did this when she addressed a professor’s use of the word “anchor baby.” Although concerned about the professor’s [a man of Color] retaliation, she used her experiential knowledge to vocalize the issue she took with using this offensive term and challenged the idea that learning could only happen through one format.

Dope described how the institution clung to its “traditions” and how different groups on campus worked to keep these traditions and that it “sound[ed] like a cult…like a literal Klans meeting.” She explained that groups such as these were rooted in the

values and practices of elite (middle to upper-class) White people, saying that they were "legacies, three-time generation Tigers. Four-time" (P1, 1332). She challenged ideas that activism had to be solely based on creating awareness, particularly for White students, and developed strategies to address access to these spaces that would center on her community, taking the knowledge she had developed through participation in these spaces. Dope explained that middle-upper class White students often secured their place in campus spaces through sharing information about said spaces and how they operated to provide access to people like themselves. She then began to utilize the same tactics to ensure that more Black people and People of Color could access the space (S2, 721).

Additionally, Dope made a conscious choice to challenge White people and resist assimilation by showing up authentically as herself. She described that the responsibility to be authentic is as part of a larger effort at advocating for those who come after her. It created greater pathways for others to engage in the campus community more authentically.

In Sista Circle, Dope articulated the idea of holding open or unlocking a door as an analogy for accessibility to those who come after her. She recalled how another Black woman held the door open for her to walk through into exclusive spaces not always accessible to low-income Black people. She said, "So I'm literally like holding the door but I'm on the other side [now], like I'm here in this space but I'm holding it open for other people to walk into" and that other people walking through allows her to move past the "threshold. I'm walking through the bedroom door now…I'm in the house, in the kitchen, eatin up yo food, in your fridge." After Sehar added, "a house party," Dope reaffirmed, "Yeah, it's a house party now". (SC2, 1255-1290). Her efforts were about

changing the space to be truly inclusive so that representation does not become solely performative. Challenging singular goals of equity and inclusion work focused on increasing awareness, Dope used her own experiences, the knowledge and actions of those before her, and considered the needs of those who will come after her to develop more well-rounded approaches in her work. These approaches were not only strategic, but allowed her to be more fully and authentically herself.

Jasmine also described choosing to authentically think and feel regardless of her hesitation or the environment. Being vocal in her classes was one way she attempted to do this, saying she is

> not usually one to speak in class, but if it's something that is, they're talking about an issue that only focused on the heteronormative…like the majority, I'll bring up a different perspective and people are like, okay (sarcastically). It's just not appreciated. (P1, 1748-1751)

Regardless of how others reacted to her input, Jasmine advocated in classroom spaces where people and conditions discounted or silenced marginalized perspectives, and in this, was authentic to her own understanding of social issues and experiential knowledge. She did not allow dialogue about social issues to work toward the goal of a singular understanding, but encouraged others to include everyone. In doing this, she also remained authentic to who she was and her own queer identity.

Although throughout Payal's experiences she expressed caution when navigating situations, particularly with men in her community and White people, she was also vocal and clear when addressing problematic behavior. In working with the men in her community she explained, "the women did all the work. They never held the men

accountable" (P1, 2041). Upon first entering the space, she did not feel comfortable having dialogues about addressing sexism in the community "up until last year when I was like fuck it, this is the only opportunity I'll have to change a dialogue and create one" (P1, 2064-2065). Eventually, they coordinated an event about Brown women, and although women in the group were hesitant, Payal was adamant that this was important and reassured the women that they "have control over" the dialogue. In spaces with men of her South Asian community, Payal challenged resistance against complacency and silence around issues of gender and the culture of patriarchy that even women ascribed to. She confronted and inspired women who expressed hesitation about addressing these issues, asking men to do work within the organization, or creating events that focused on the experiences of Brown women in particular. They worked with another organization on campus to host an invent to address these issues.

Unfortunately, men in their community did not show up to the event because as Payal explained "they wouldn't. Not that they shouldn't…they don't want to engage in that dialogue because that puts them in an uncomfortable situation" (P1, 2110-2112). Inevitably, the event became a place for a more "comfortable and open" dialogue that would not be met with counter-arguments or resistance from men. Although weary about a pre-existing culture centered on the needs and expectations of men in the group, Payal challenged and resisted them by de-centering them in this ethnic-based space and she created an environment inclusive of the perspectives and experiences of women.

As previously discussed, Sehar intentionally selected courses with Black and Brown women professors in Women's and Gender Studies where she felt she could "be myself, I feel like they have my back. They're understanding. I don't have to sound a

certain way" (P1, 1269-1272). She selected Women of Color for classes in women's and gender studies because they "prioritize" race. She explained that Women of Color are,

> home…I thrive in those spaces, they don't make me feel like shit for challenging things. It's a space where I respect the person who's talking because I know their life experiences shape and inform the way that they teach and practice. For them, it's not just work, it's existence. Not saying White women don't have struggles that's not what I'm saying, but their struggles mirror mine (P1, 1178-1185).

This is different from her experiences in other classes where the content was not always accessible to her and referenced the idea that people continuously saw her as a "killjoy." The goal in other classes became about focusing on gender solely; as a result, Sehar intentionally sought to engage in content that included the experiences of those with multiple marginalized identities. In this way, she found spaces where she could be her authentic self.

Healing the Divide: Creating a New Culture

The participants in this study worked to heal divides that positioned them as objects, not only in relation to those with dominant identities, but also in relation to others with whom they do not share the same marginalized experience. Participants challenged subject-object duality, rather than internalizing it, by examining their own privilege and aligning themselves with those who have marginalized identities they do not share. In doing this, they worked to heal divides in their communities by recognizing that there are dominant perspectives that marginalize other members, with multiple identities, within the same community.

Participants, like Dope, advocated against heterosexism in Black spaces; Payal advocated against ableism within the South Asian community; and Sehar advocated against anti-Blackness in the Asian community. In doing this advocacy, they remained authentic to their own ideologies around liberation, while serving as models of what solidarity looks like in action for those within their community. They healed the splits that often occurred between spaces, and worked toward a praxis that was intersectional, recognizing the humanity of those who experience oppression differently than they do. They uplifted and engaged in the very consciousness and praxis that those with dominant identities have denied them access to. They centered this consciousness and praxis in their work, for the betterment of their own community. They served as a bridge between issues that people often perceived and treated as isolated, learning the struggles of others in order to be in solidarity with them.

Participants like Mala, Sehar, and Payal underscored that their struggle to engage with men in their respective ethnic and racial communities included challenging how these spaces marginalized them and centered masculinity. In her personal interactions, particularly with men, Mala used her voice and was direct, challenging patriarchal dynamics that even men who claim to be allies have internalized. She was also adamant about setting expectations and boundaries about how men who are allies show up for her. Sehar and Payal also challenged men by being vocal about what is unacceptable. In advocating for themselves and their needs as women, they challenged oppressive dualities and that men looked down upon them and thought they did not deserve to have their needs met.

Uniquely, Jasmine indicated that in particular spaces, such as that of QTPOC, it felt like it was the "battle of the oppressed" (P2, 881) and that "sometimes the most privileged people of the group get shamed for talking about how they feel oppressed because like other people have it worse. So they feel like they shouldn't even be talking to begin with" (P2, 889-891). Jasmine referenced being questioned as authentically queer for "adher[ing] to gender expression norms" (P2, 1207) and felt excluded as a White Latina saying,

> I remember specifically this time that I felt uncomfortable when they were talking about White Latinos…they were just talking about how they don't belong in this type of space and stuff and I thought that was interesting because Leo was there and he's you know a blonde Latino so (laughs), I just thought that was interesting and I did feel a little targeted in that moment. I'm sure they weren't trying to but I don't know when they use words like that. And try to say that certain people don't belong certain places. I felt like that was perpetuating judgement and hate and there's been a few examples of that (P1, 1090-1097).

Jasmine was the only participant who highlighted the challenge of navigating a space for marginalized peoples, while also holding privilege in those same identities. Given that the experiences she referenced are those in which she holds privilege, it is possible that she is particularly sensitive about when others check her privilege. However, based on the framing of the conversations, it appeared that authenticity politics played a regulating role in the dynamics of the space. Some people perceived Jasmine as White, but in her experience, this depended, in part, on context. In the rural, predominantly White environment of her childhood and in White campus spaces, Jasmine described that people

did not perceive her as White; however, in a space with people of Color, this perception changed.

Participants repeatedly described having difficulty healing divides with White people and White women, more specifically. They described that this was largely because of White fragility; White dominance in representation; and White people centering themselves and discounting their perspectives, experiences, and efforts. Participants like Sehar explained how these interactions create conditions where she had "to seek out other people of Color to thrive and be happy" (T2). Although White people, and White women's, overt and covert unwillingness to heal divides were apparent, participants expressed being able to heal divides with other Women of Color. Almost all participants described how they were able to find space to discuss and understand the intersections of multiple oppressive forces with Women of Color. They educated one another, recognized and explored privilege and marginalization, worked to understand struggles outside of their own, validated themselves, and sought to do better. They engaged in the work of understanding themselves fully and how they can do better both for themselves and for others.

For example, as Dope described her growing consciousness, she emphasized the necessity of self-reflection and introspection, particularly with those who support and hold her accountable in this process. She reflected,

> talking to one of my friends who we talk about this like all the time, every time me and her link up, we talking about like how can we be better people. But fuck, here's what I did today that was so shitty. Because think about who I took something away from or something like that (P1, 641-644).

Because Dope was often in spaces that oppressed her or focused on raising the consciousness of White people, she made it a point to engage in relationships that provided her the opportunity to process when her behavior has been problematic. This was in an effort to hold herself accountable and move forward as a better advocate and activist.

Sehar also described how Women of Color nurtured her spirit. Whether it was friendships or a formal Women of Color retreat, these spaces and relationships did not force Sehar to preserve an "image" or be a representative of a community/group. She did not have to preoccupy herself with "hyper-analyzing what's your perception of me because [Women of Color are] not here to judge me. (SC1, 1236-1237)." She was free and felt "comfortable," even when other Women of Color challenged her thinking.

Finally, Mala underscored how the Women of Color Retreat on campus was an opportunity to authentically engage her identities, experiences, and the issues she cares about. Within this space she could explore herself fully; remove "the mask;" and engage the complexity of her experience, including her race, gender, class, and upbringing in inner-city communities. She said,

> It was the first time that I heard someone say that they were from the inner city of wherever and that they were. Like, that's how they lived. And that's, that's just like, that's home for them…and it was also like, we're talking about machismo and how that person's traditional Mexican family was like so indulged into it (P2, 679-683).

Here she underscored how Women of Color were able to heal the splits in understanding themselves by dialoguing across multiple identities and experiences. She could

"normalize" her feelings and engage in a vulnerability that the larger campus, classrooms, and other social justice spaces did not provide, where, as she references, they forced her to wear a mask and "code-switch" (T2, P2, 697). Through the experience of validation, she was able to better understand the privilege she possesses as well. Although this retreat space provided an opportunity for Mala to process this reality, she explained that Women of Color as individuals, and programs focused on Women of Color, received little recognition on campus. Yet, the labor Women of Color contribute to the institution was extensive.

Uncovering Her True Self

Participants demonstrated how they were on their own paths toward embracing themselves and recognizing the importance of understanding themselves and their experiences. They highlighted this through identifying the baggage and pain oppression had forced them to carry. They engaged in personal healing and restorative work to which the campus community had often denied them access.

Jasmine emphasized that her efforts to control her emotions have evolved over time, saying "there's been a lot of things in the past that I haven't let myself feel. So even just like crying about something that happened, and then, I don't know. Healing through crying, writing, reading" (P2, 1525-1527). When I asked her why she felt there were things she had not let herself feel, she said "as a way of survival (begins to cry), that's hard to say…that's a lot to put on someone, especially someone so young. I put a lot of things out of my mind for so long, just so I would be okay" (P2, 1531-1535). Jasmine went on to explain that she had to do that so that she would not internalize the oppression perpetrated upon her and "[pretend] some of the things that happened didn't happen was

a part of what I did for survival, to make it out of that" (P2, 1570-1571). For Jasmine, survival meant suppressing her thoughts, emotions, and feelings. Dis-engaging from them and those experiences was a way to "make it out." This may be why, during our pláticas, she struggled to remember events from her past. As opposed to how she used to cope, Jasmine was now working on healing from what she described as "racial trauma," explaining that she's sought to "reflect and make peace with things (P2, 1517). Jasmine was working to lessen the baggage she carried through engaging in introspective strategies, and was realizing that she deserves more than mere "survival."

Mala's well-being had been significantly compromised on campus and in the local community, which she referred to as "Gringolandia," a joyless environment where she could not find herself reflected among White faces who forced her to dull the colors of her existence. She felt as though she had to wear a mask, saying "que puede hacer una aqui, nada" and that even finding her "group of people" was not enough to make this community a place she wanted to be in. She stated, "It's just been dreadful. Like I've never. I can't recall a time where I've been joyful to be in Columbia. And so every time that I think, every time that I'm away and I think about coming back to Columbia, it gets me emotional" (P2, 1068-1071).

Mala no longer wanted to contribute to a community that did not re-energize her, but rather robbed her of her joy. She sought to process and understand her feelings through working with a Latina therapist (outside of the institution) who "could at least in some way comprehend what it was like to be here in Missouri as a PoC" (P2, 1092). She sought to communicate about and understand how she is marginalized, as opposed to

allowing it to swallow her or force her to wear a mask. She also frequently left campus to avoid sacrificing her sense of self.

Sehar described that at the Women of Color Retreat in the Asian Pacific Islander caucus she was able to process experiences with interpersonal violence. She dialogued with other Asian women who experienced similar dynamics of abuse in the home growing up. Within this space she felt "empowered" by having a shared experience and relied on the support of others who could understand and relate. This was different from her experiences with White women who made her feel like she is on display if she discussed these issues. In this space, she did not feel "shame," but was able to be in community with others like her and better understand their experiences collectively. She was also able to begin processing and healing in a way that she longed for. She indicated that unfortunately a one-time experience such as this "isn't enough" (P1, 1649), because it's just an isolated event and one cannot necessarily explore "different level[s]" or "layers" of experience.

Payal explained that being among others who she felt would not judge her and could understand her allowed her to be vulnerable. She explained, "being comfortable to talk about those experiences [witnessing domestic violence] with South Asian women…the first person I ever told 1000% of the things that happened to me was a South Asian woman" (P1, 1785-1786). Again, by sharing with others who could understand her experience, she did not have to preoccupy herself with the possibility that they might judge or shame her.

Spirit of Self-determination Remains

Through the process of uncovering their true selves, participants realized their resolve and committed to their own journeys. Rarely did participants express a sense of joy or fulfillment through the educational and emotional labor they engaged in to increase the consciousness of those with dominant identities. It exhausted them, as they saw minimal change and expressed that serving the needs of those with privilege and power is a burden. They did not however allow the "empty" commitment of the institution to kill their spirit or hope. Instead, they began to understand their activist and advocacy contributions as able to fuel their spirits, if they engaged in work that was more important to them.

Through the process of engaging in campus diversity work, Sehar realized that focusing her time and talents on disconnecting from her own emotions was wasteful and she would rather focus them on the needs in her own community. She said, "I get tired of talking to White people" and she would prefer to be "building community" and "solidarity" (SC2, 1393). Similarly, Payal shifted the focus of her work as well. Frustrated by the limited scope of her efforts and the lack of commitment from the institution effectively drained her. "I want to be outside in the community doing my work because I know that has a bigger impact and that not only satisfies me more but helps someone along the way" (SC2, 1666-1667). To resist letting the lackluster commitment from the institution toward justice drain her, Payal began to understand that her labor was not solely about what she can give, but also about how her work can fulfill her. She then sought a more reciprocal form of activism that was not exploitative.

Both Mala and Jasmine articulated that their existence was a form of resistance. Recognizing that existing in this university setting as someone with multiple marginalized identities was in and of itself powerful, Jasmine began to understand her activism as supporting, mentoring, and guiding younger peers. She said,

> So I feel like my activism has gone from super angry to super calm and I didn't mean for it to go that way. It just kind of happened that way. I realized how important it is for people to have people to look up to. And I never thought of myself as like a role model for anything but I guess just being like an openly queer person of color in general is seen as something to look up to (P1, 1346-1350).

and that upon getting active in the campus community others began to "come out" to her. She recounted a time when a friend she had known from childhood finally came out to her saying,

> I was the first person he came out to. And that was so significant to me because at the time, I felt like I wasn't. I felt like I was taking a break from activism. But it was a time period where I probably made the most difference (P1, 1357-1360).

She began to validate this form of activism that directly supported the experiences of those who also experienced marginalization based on more than one identity.

Jasmine sought to create space for something new: knowledge and history about QTPOC people. She supported the organization in coordinating an art-exhibition filled with QTPOC art, as well as developing an event around QTPOC history. Jasmine met her own needs, and those of her peers, by providing knowledge about their community by creating informal educational spaces. However, the curriculum in her classes was been

centered around Whiteness, heteronormativity, and patriarchy, leading her to conduct her own research that was inclusive of her lived experiences. As she stated, “It sucks. It sucks that I have to go out of my way to, like learn about things that I care about when I’m paying so much for tuition that I should be learning about everything. I don’t know, it’s very excluding” (P2, 216-218). Nonetheless, she prioritized self-determination by creating awareness not just for herself, but also for all marginalized people.

In her narrative, Mala made it clear that nurturing her well-being was critical to having longevity in engaging in activism. Like other participants, she was no longer willing to stay in spaces/situations that stripped her of her humanity. She recognized that she can be fulfilled and find joy in combating varying forms of oppression. As opposed to working in spaces that forced her to engage in forms of activism defined by oppressive structures or people who exploit her, she began to prioritize her well-being as a form of resistance. This was particularly important as she described how campus practitioners ignored and discounted her experiences. For example, her advisor made her feel like “it’s the end of the world, especially if you’re not graduating on time” and did not consider the kinds of additional emotional, mental, and financial support students such as Mala might need. Experiences such as these, coupled with her engagement in the Women of Color Retreat, reminded her of the importance of her well-being. She said, “a lot of the conversations and workshops that we had [at the Women of Color Retreat] were centered around taking care of ourselves or what it means for us in our own worlds to be activist or what it means to advocate” (P2, 710-712). Shortly after, Mala realized,

> Nah, you're not doing the bare minimum, like, yes, it may seem like at points, you're doing the bare minimum because we're just so used to telling ourselves

> like, you got to be everywhere you got to do everything. But once you realize, like, if I don't get this diploma, if I don't like take care of myself, I won't be able to do this work in the long run. It doesn't feel like it's the bare minimum sometimes (S2, 1627-1633).

In prioritizing her own well-being, she resisted a student involvement culture that can be exhausting and taxing. She refocused her energy and efforts so that she no longer had to sacrifice herself and her goals.

Dope agreed with and echoed Mala's sentiments. She began to realize that IDE efforts were contingent on ongoing student labor, which did not create the level of change needed to dismantle patterns of exclusion for incoming students. Her efforts exhausted and exploited her. She explained that she was getting ready to "quit" activities with which she was involved on campus, "like shit, what Mala said, like shit I gotta graduate. I'm sorry I don't give a fuck about none of this shit. Like I can give a fuck about it in like my terms or like with my time. I can give a fuck enough about it to like read more about this shit or like, like learning on my own time" (SC2, 1760-1762). Thus, instead of taking on the responsibility of educating others that the university demanded of her, Dope began to understand that raising her own consciousness would support her activist and advocacy efforts.

Conclusion

The findings in this chapter underscore how those with privilege and positional power forced or created conditions that forced participants to be activists and advocates in a regulated and specific manner. This, at times, resulted in participants engaging in ways that were in contradiction to who they were and led to a significant amount of

additional mental and emotional labor. Through continuing to develop their consciousness and align their politics with their personhood, participants also challenged and complicated their resistance efforts.

The findings from this chapter will be further explored in next chapter, where I answer the research questions and draw conclusions. I also introduce implications and recommendations for future practice and research.

Chapter 5:

Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter, I discuss how the findings answer the research questions using the lenses of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) and Mestiza consciousness (Anzaldúa, 1999) to interpret the outcomes and conclusions. I place these interpretations in dialogue with pre-existing research that explored the needs, exclusion, and resistance of Women of Color students engaged in advocacy and activism and their experiences on college campuses more broadly. I then present the implications for theory, method/methodology, and practice. Finally, I share closing thoughts on the research study and its significance.

The themes in Chapter 4 provide a deeper understanding of the role power plays in the experiences of the Women of Color in this study, and how that power forces (in)action among the participants. Power, particularly in the form of relations with others, significantly shaped how Women of Color participated in and maneuvered throughout their activism. An intersectional analysis reveals that although oppression functions differently on various levels, the women in this study directly face it through interpersonal interactions on campus. Findings point to how the needs of participants as intersectionally-oppressed people, are often not considered, excluded, and invisible in efforts of equity and justice on campus. This is a result of campus inclusion efforts that are performative and silence the needs of students who have been historically excluded in the institution, particularly by multiple forms of oppression.

Inevitably, it became the responsibility of Women of Color themselves to identify spaces that support their needs and honor their complexity. They found(ed) these spaces largely because of dynamics outside of their control, including structural issues, lack of

representation, large white student demographic, marginal commitment toward diversity and inclusion by institutional leaders, and lack of resources specific to Women of Color. Also, participants were unacknowledged and excluded from spaces that should serve them and their interests. I further unpack these dynamics and experiences within the next part of this chapter as I interpret the findings to answer the research questions.

Discussion

In this section, I respond to the research questions, as well as draw conclusions and make recommendations from the findings. In the first section, I respond to the first two research questions. Because the concept of power largely manifested in the form of excluding, ousting, and de-centering participants and their experiences, responses to the first two research questions were interconnected. As a reminder, the first research question is: *How does power shape the experiences of undergraduate Women of Color engaged in activism and advocacy at the University of Missouri?."* The second is: *How do Women of Color experience exclusion in their activist/advocacy work and or spaces on campus?* In the second section, I respond to the final research question, reflecting on how power informed resistance efforts. As a reminder, the final research question was: *What strategies do Women of Color employ to resist marginalization in and outside of activist work?* I now move to address the first two research questions.

Power and Exclusion

This section explores how power shaped the experiences of participants, but also how power often emerged through excluding and marginalizing participants. Overall these responses illustrate how campus culture was dominated by and centered Whiteness, even in equity and inclusion efforts. Additionally, is how those with privileged identities

marginalize the experiences, emotions, perspectives, and regulate the behaviors of Women of Color. This at times forces them to engage in additional mental and emotional labor. Finally, I discuss how Women of Color who participate in campus advocacy and activist work are engaged in an abusive relationship with an institution who may benefit from their social justice labor, without meeting their needs.

The campus culture, largely dominated by Whiteness, created an environment where Women of Color had to assume the role of educator and prioritize race in both the curricular dimensions of campus life, as well as co-curricular interracial spaces on campus**.** Similar to previous studies (Linder, 2011; Ong, 2005; Tate & Linn, 2005), this study highlights how centering Whiteness makes race salient for participants. Extending on previous work (Linder, 2011; Martínez Alemán, 2000), I found that a culture of Whiteness forced participants to prioritize race within their advocacy. White people across campus refused to acknowledge the racial identities and experiences of participants. In addition, racial inequity, more broadly, was also ignored, which relegated participants to the role of educator. White people and spaces, indirectly and directly, asked participants to invoke their consciousness and experiential knowledge to create awareness and understanding for them about racism.

A lack of representation of others with shared identities and ideologies created conditions in which participants felt pressured to advocate for the experiences of those of Color. Hence, being the "only ones" (i.e., People of Color and/or Women of Color). The structural and ideological dominance of Whiteness forced participants into the margins within classrooms and the curriculum, and at times, in their social justice efforts. In classroom spaces focused on social justice, participants relied on their consciousness and

experiential knowledge to educate their peers and confront their problematic behaviors, while also challenging a homogenous and limited curriculum (Chow, 1985; Comas-Diaz, 1991; Liu, 2006; Goodstein, & Gyant, 1990; Kim, 2001; Lee, 2000; Revilla, 2004a; Vaccaro & Camba-Kelsay, 2016; Zinn et al., 1986). At times, this also meant challenging faculty members directly, such as in Mala's case. This forced knowledge sharing contributes to the educational experiences and awareness of White people, responsibilities that should also belong to faculty in classrooms or the institution at large.

Course curriculum defaulted to a single-issue/identity, leaving little to no space to address and examine issues from an intersectional lens. This forced Women of Color to be race educators and prevented them from developing an intersectional consciousness. Simultaneously, they lacked access to a rich curriculum that embraced the complexities of their own identities. Further, faculty, particularly those who are not Women of Color, had not considered how Women of Color's lives are distinct from those of White women. Participants, like Sehar, made intentional choices to take courses from specific faculty. They relied on the hope that faculty Women of Color *might* be able to meet their needs. These needs included engaging White supremacy, moving beyond a Black-White binary, and incorporating heterosexism and capitalism within the course content and discussions.

Although the responsibility of the curriculum falls on individual faculty members, faculty members may make decisions about what to include based upon perceived priorities of the institution. This may account for participants' reports of an absence of intersectional analysis in classrooms. Thus, participants experience structural intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) as they highlight how classroom curricula and pedagogy are organized on a single-axis of analysis, which prioritizes Whiteness and

White students. By ignoring and/or stifling Women of Color's educational needs and consciousness, White students have their needs met.

Outside of classroom spaces, participants recalled White peers who did not understand racism. Mala, Sehar, Dope, and Payal all underscored the emphasis on having to educate through a Black-White binary so that it was digestible and accessible to White people. This included peers who were completely unaware, as well as those who were more "liberal" or socially conscious. This educative approach prevented them from engaging in discourse around ethnic solidarity and understanding how White supremacy is also perpetuated by People of Color. Additionally, this kind of prioritization of race, based on the needs of White people, inhibits complexity and forces these Women of Color students to analyze and address campus issues through a single-axis of analysis (Crenshaw, 1987). Participants observed political intersectionality when White people in interethnic spaces prioritized their own needs and interests (Crenshaw, 1991); this, in turn, regulated how participants engaged in activist efforts by fulfilling their perceived primary role as educators. This often occurred at the expense of participants' own well-being. The negligence on the part of institutional leaders coupled with an unaware White student body creates conditions in which the needs of Women of Color rarely if ever get met by the institution at large, as well as the many campus spaces they occupy.

Centering Whiteness and White dominance, however, is not just the result of an institutional culture that does not cultivate an understanding of how White supremacy operates.

At the time of data collection, the campus was historically and predominantly White at all levels, with White students comprising 79% of the population potentially more as

international students are categorized separately. Top institutional leaders being predominantly White men or perceived as such, particularly at the time of this study. When an institution is predominantly White, structural intersectionality is centered. When institutional leaders and community members refuse to acknowledge the institution's roots and uphold White supremacy, White dominance is ideologically reinforced. Although there were only five participants in this research study, they highlight how institutional leaders are negligent in understanding how Whiteness permeates the institution and how White peers are also largely unaware of this reality. All participants communicated that institutional leaders were clueless, unaware, or dismissive of how campus traditions and culture were rooted in whiteness *and* elitism that had class status connotations. This is similar to Linder and Rodriguez's (2012) research that highlighted how practitioners ignored Women of Color's salient identities. This results in activism that almost exclusively relies on creating awareness for and educating White students, which was on the backs of the Women of Color in this study.

Similar to the prioritization of race in academic classrooms, is that identity centers, student organizations, and other social justice spaces are often centered on and serve those with more privilege. This effectively displaces participants from examining issues pertinent to them and forces them to participate based on the needs of those with privilege. The needs of participants are discounted and cast aside, at times leading them to disengage from these spaces, having their voices silenced and needs unmet, and stifling their ability to be fully themselves. It also requires that they serve in caretaker and educator roles. This often happened in identity centers dominated by White students. Participants described how they prioritized their well-being, as some of these spaces were

hostile to their existence. To do this, they disengage so that they do not have to minimize themselves, their emotions, beliefs, and the issues about which they care.

Structurally, the defaulting to serving the predominant White demographic has a trickle-down effect in social justice spaces and services on campus that do not have a focus on race and ethnicity. This results in spaces being dominated by and serving the most dominant group, White students. Although active members of the campus social justice community, none of the participants felt comfortable accessing the RSVP Center, the LGBTQ Resource Center, or the Women's Center because of White dominance. A number of participants described how they felt they would not be heard, included, or would experience othering in these predominantly White spaces. They recalled experiences with White women in and out of social justice spaces that affirmed this feeling, and White people more broadly.

Participants experience representational intersectionality as White people are most associated with spaces such as the RSVP Center, the LGBTQ Resource Center, or the Women's Center. Thus, White people become the population who is served through these spaces. As Crenshaw (1991) explained, "the problem of representational intersectionality—in particular, how the production of images of women of color and the contestations over those images tend to ignore the intersectional interests of women of color" (p. 1283). Unfortunately, in these cases, the actual bodies and images of Women of Color within said spaces rarely exist, rendering them invisible. This results in the abandonment of Women of Color in institutionalized equity and inclusion efforts, as a lack of representation signals exclusion and inaccessibility. Further, participants chose to

disconnect from social justice or identity-based spaces rather than to be invisible (Linder, 2011; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Revilla, 2004b; Revilla, 2010).

These spaces default to serving the needs of White students, without considering how marginalization happens differently for those who experience multiple forms of oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). Participants described a lack of programming and outreach focused on supporting the experiences of Women of Color within these spaces. Although the LGBTQ Center housed a student organization called QTPOC (Queer and Trans People of Color), which Jasmine participated in, this group exists under the larger, more mainstream (read: White) Queer organization on campus. These are other examples of political intersectionality. The lack of representation, outreach, and inclusion within these social justice spaces then re-creates harm for Women of Color by meeting the political needs of those with the most privilege in said space. Political intersectionality is reinforced when participants were asked to conform or disconnect from the issues of importance to them, and to prioritize the interests of those with more privilege and power (Crenshaw, 1991). Certainly, those who lead these social justice spaces are not trying to purposely exclude Women of Color. However, as Crenshaw (1991) highlighted, "intersectional subordination need not be intentionally produced; in fact, it is frequently the consequence of the imposition of one burden that interacts with preexisting vulnerabilities to create yet another dimension of disempowerment" (p. 1249).

Participants were also de-centered and/or displaced from social justice work as they had to cautiously and intentionally navigate the emotions and egos of those who shared a marginalized identity with them, but also had privilege they did not have. Participants then employed additional labor – educationally and emotionally – to advance

social justice efforts. Again, participants faced political intersectionality when they witnessed those with privilege driving how progress will and can occur. Similarly, political intersectionality was reinforced when the emotions of those with privilege were foregrounded (Crenshaw, 1991). Multiple participants described White fragility as an issue when engaging with White people, and White women more specifically. Centering Whiteness and White fragility created barriers to engage in anti-racist discourse and actions needed to create an equitable campus community. This also prevented Women of Color from prioritizing knowledge-creation and advocacy on their own terms.

A number of participants also described caution in addressing men of color because of their egos or how they might respond to being oppressive. Dominant ideologies were reified through interpersonal interactions in race- and ethnic-focused spaces. For example, participants described how men in their communities centered themselves, dismissed women, and refused to see how they perpetuated patriarchy, even when the men considered themselves as allies. This made solidarity with men allies more difficult, and confirmed that the women should not trust others. They needed to heal from these experiences, like so many others. As Audre Lorde (YEAR) wrote about in *The Uses of the Erotic*, by defaulting to masculine ways of doing, it denies the erotic and that which draws out feeling and intuition. In essence, this forces women to be in service to men, and again deny their own emotions and wellness in the process.

As Women of Color attempt to reach the intended goal of creating understanding for those who do not possess it, they are forced to engage in strategic and intentional ways that center the feelings of those with privilege. Thus, caution around fragility becomes a determining factor on how effective they can be or become in educating White

people and also men. This effectiveness is inadvertently decided by White peoples' or Brown men's comfort levels as opposed to their own. Advocacy and activism then becomes defined by a productiveness that hinges on protecting white comfortability by "calmly explaining things" (Sehar, P2, 1478) or, in other instances, protecting men's fragility and ego.

Previous scholarship has illuminated the caution in which Women of Color engage when discussing patriarchy or addressing men's problematic-ness (Lenzy, 2019a) or White women's exclusionary practices and ideologies (Linder, 2011). Women of Color do not decide this effectiveness. This inhibits their authenticity and de-centers them in social justice efforts on campus as they become inundated with helping others get it, even those who are also marginalized. Further, it allows those with privileged identities to decide how progress is made in relation to social justice, but also creates regulations and standards for how Women of Color interact. This results in spaces for marginalized groups based on one shared identity, which further fuels the political intersectionality Women of Color confront when trying to meet their equity-based needs.

Participants indicated that their consciousness about intersectional oppression increased through their social justice work on campus, in part, through experiencing and observing intersectional-exclusion. As mentioned earlier, this further demonstrated that academic and social justice spaces on campus analyze, understand, and address issues through a single-axis of analysis (Crenshaw, 1991). The institution becomes a place that allows Women of Color to explore their consciousness, while simultaneously stifling it, specifically for individuals with multiple-marginalized identities. Participants' stories indicated that they explored intersectional consciousness, in part, through their exclusion

from and marginalization in courses and spaces on campus designed to address and examine social justice issues. At times, this led them to think more critically about the kinds of issues they wanted to address and how they intended to meet their needs as Women of Color on campus. As a result, participants created formal or informal spaces of their own to discuss their experiences as Women of Color (Linder & Rodiguez, 2012; Revilla, 2010). Because of a lack of trust and experiences of not being acknowledged, participants ultimately opted out of spaces where White women dominated, such as the Women's Center or the RSVP Center. Instead, they created their own spaces to engage in topics and issues that are important to and included them. These spaces were essential in fostering a Mestiza consciousness, discussed later in more detail.

The scarcity of space and initiatives for Women of Color provides further evidence of the lack of equity and inclusion efforts that focus on intersectional marginalization. Of the three that currently exist, two were established by Women of Color students, and are more recent efforts, such as the Mizzou Black Women's Initiative (2010) and the Womxn of Color Retreat (2015). Participants often referenced the Women of Color Retreat as a space where they could fully engage as themselves.

Additionally, administrators and peers with privileged identities (that participants do not possess) marginalize participants in their activist and advocacy work, as they demonstrate little to no awareness of how Women of Color experience the world. They made little, if no, attempt to understand the additional labor they expected of participants in relation to social justice work (Lenzy, 2019ab; Linder, 2011; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Revilla, 2004b). This forced them to perform in ways that are inauthentic to who they are, or at a minimum, to wrestle with how they should interact with others. It also

signals a lack of care or interest in who participants are or what they care about, outside of what they can do.

Participants compartmentalized their emotions and identities with White peers generally, and within gender-based spaces more specifically. They had to be delicate toward, careful about, and astute to the emotions of white peers, even when they were perceived as or avowed to be more "liberal." In doing this, they ignored their emotions and perspectives. Participants deprioritized their feelings for the sake of increasing consciousness for White people. They were forced to anticipate how White peers might feel and respond caringly to their opinions and feelings, which required them to play mental gymnastics and, at times, second-guess themselves. As Payal articulated, they had to "watch out for white fragility."

Like with White peers, participants also described having to interact intentionally with administrators and faculty, mainly those who were men, and in most cases, those who were White. These interactions placed additional mental and emotional labor on Women of Color based on how they are likely perceived. Participants had experiences with those in power who did not acknowledge how they are differently-situated. In addition, if they did, they made no attempts to challenge or disrupt power imbalances. In this sense, participants encountered a kind of ideological intersectional marginality rooted in gender-race stereotypes that informed interpersonal interactions. This builds on our understanding of intersectionality and how it emerges in interpersonal interactions. In addition, political intersectionality is reinforced, as the needs of those with privilege are met, at the expense of Women of Color, who are invisible. Unfortunately, these interactions also impact participants' mental and emotional well-being, which has already

been compromised through their campus experiences. It also underscores how those with privilege discount the needs of Women of Color, even as Women of Color become preoccupied with the needs of those with privilege.

Although they often sought to create inclusive environments, Women of Color did not always advocate on their own behalf by creating boundaries and expressing themselves and their emotional needs. Previous research has explored how Black women doctoral students engaged in activism, often supporting and speaking up on the behalf of marginalized experiences of others, but they did not always advocate for themselves (Lenzy, 2019b). Experiences, such as those in this study, illustrated how participants interacted with individuals who were unaware of and/or refused to see them as Women of Color who mattered.

Furthermore, as illustrated throughout this sub-section, an exclusive institutional culture and oppressive interpersonal interactions, lead to additional mental and emotional labor for participants. In these instances, they were placed in a position to choose between their well-being and being an advocate. They contended with additional mental and emotional labor, while simultaneously suppressing their feelings and emotions. At other times, they were intentionally strategic in how they addressed problematic statements and actions about race and gender, protecting their feelings. Throughout the experiences and reflections of participants, they craved space and opportunities to heal and needed opportunities to address and explore their mental and emotional well-being. This was particularly salient when interactions with others created fear, compromised their sense of self, and disrupted their ability to be authentic. They described a culture and climate that did not prioritize their well-being or signal that they were safe and

protected, forcing them to compartmentalize aspects of self. Continued experiences of exclusion, exploitation, and interactions that fostered distrust with those of dominant identity groups further magnified their need to process their emotions and heal. Although these Women of Color were persisting, the cost of their persistence is unaccounted for by the university. To survive at this university, participants had to actively hide their needs and feelings, prohibiting them from being their full selves (Chu, 1986; Lenzy, 2019b; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Revilla, 2004b).

Participants' stories point to how they engaged in a labor as advocates and activists, but their work was not reciprocated through institutionalized efforts of equity and justice. Participants described direct and indirect ways that the institution could have supported them, including developing intentional initiatives that were multi-dimensional, offering healing initiatives and efforts; supporting their mental health, assisting them financially, addressing injustice using intersectional praxis, increasing representation of Faculty and Staff of Color; de-centering Whiteness in inclusion work; and incorporating anti-racist and intersectional analysis in curriculum. Participants described being exploited by the institution for their commitment, passion, and genuine care in addressing injustice on campus. The "responsibility they felt to others and the lack of support they received" had consequences, including burnout (Vaccaro & Mena, 2011, p. 357).

Participants served their campus community in campus organizations and classrooms, as educators, caretakers, and creators of initiatives, services, organizations, and programs. They were often forced into educator and caretaker roles because of a culture that centers the most dominant [often White people]. Additionally, these roles are also a product of a culture that has not prioritized challenging, let alone dismantling,

interlocking forms of oppression. This in turn, de-centered the needs of Women of Color, as they focus on goals of increasing awareness. This culture of exploitation of activists was also cultivated by institutional leaders' lack of commitment to true equity and inclusion work that often resulted in women's exhaustion (Vaccaro & Mena, 2011).

Participant narratives exposed how campus inclusion and equity efforts were performative, and on the backs of students (Ahmed, 2007; Verjee, 2013). Yet, they were forced to meet their own needs, mainly through developing and participating in spaces and relationships where complexity would be honored. For example, students created initiatives to address their own healing, such as the Healing from Racial Injustice Group. In addition, students established the Womxn of Color Retreat. Students needed these initiatives, and campus leaders had not met their needs. In the end, students used their labor, when others on campus should have.

This pattern of Women of Color creating spaces to address and meet their needs is a reoccurring trend within higher education (Croom, et al., 2017; Goodstein & Gynat, 1990; Lenzy, 2019a; Linder, 2011; Nickels & Kowalski-Braun, 2012; Revilla, 2010). These spaces are imperative to support Women of Color; however, establishing them is, at times, a direct result of the hostile, oppressive, and exclusionary practices in the campus community, even in other social justice spaces. Although the institutional culture created the issues they contend with, the institution has failed to take responsibility to successfully address them; thus, Women of Color become personally responsible to meet their needs.

Consistent with previous research, participants identified some Women of Color administrators and faculty who provided opportunities to explore an intersectional

consciousness and education about how to do social justice work (Domingue, 2015). In fact, without being prompted, all participants referenced at least one Woman of Color who supported them in their journey; they rarely, if ever, mentioned campus administrators or faculty who were not Women of Color. In fact, they often recalled oppressive experiences with White women and men faculty irrespective of racial or ethnic identity. Participants highlighted how Women of Color faculty and administrators centered their intersecting identities; developed more inclusive curriculum; provided important, but unsupported, labor to the institution; and reinforced their consciousness and well-being.

As with participants, Women of Color faculty and administrators on campus took responsibility for labor that institutional leaders did not provide. Participants lamented that these women, who were essential to their success as students, do not get the respect, credit, or visibility they deserve. Because there were few Women of Color faculty at the university, participants did not have many opportunities to build relationships with or seek support from a support network of Women of Color. Moreover, Women of Color on campus may become unable or unwilling to provide this labor, as it is not appreciated or uplifted by campus leadership. Just as participants' needs are not reciprocated, they perceived the same lack of investment in Women of Color faculty and staff.

In addition to creating their own spaces and initiatives, Women of Color participants often developed critical and strategic ways to counter the marginalization they experienced on campus and in their advocacy and activism. I discuss this further in the next section.

Resisting Marginalization

Participants described feelings of frustration, conflict, and complexity as they navigated social justice work and spaces on campus, as well as within the larger campus community. Participant engagement can be understood as becoming a nueva Mestiza, who "undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 100). Although participants navigated multiple spaces that demanded that they show up in a particular way, they also made agentic decisions informed by an evolving consciousness. In this, they "decide to act and not react" (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 101) in a way that is more aligned with their being, their knowledge, and who they want to be in the world. In doing so, they determine "possibilities for action" (Christian, 1989, p. 86) and work toward wholeness, healing, self-determination, pluralistic thinking. These are efforts that were nearly impossible within existing campus structures and practices.

Sometimes, participants were aware of choices they intentionally made to advance awareness and social justice on campus, even if it conflicted with their sense of self. This is similar to Lenzy's (2019b) research underscoring how Black women participated in "conscious back-seating," where participants took a backseat as "a form of purposeful activist strategy" (p. 125). My findings expand on this work, by examining how, through an evolving Mestiza consciousness, participants engaged in behaviors and acts that more deeply aligned with their ideologies. They realized Mestiza consciousness through changing their understanding of "reality" and how they understood themselves and their actions within that reality (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 102). Participants moved "from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking…that includes rather than excludes"

(p. 101). In this, they resisted by engaging in activist efforts where they could find joy and feel fulfilled, rather than seeing joy as separate from their work. Thus, they did this through actively resisting oppressive behaviors directed toward them, calls to minimize themselves, and being used by the institution.

The culture of exploitation often positioned participants to serve the needs of others and de-center their needs, emotions, and interests in social justice work. However, through Mestiza consciousness, participants reframed activism and their work. Many near the end of their college experience expressed exhaustion and frustration with giving their time, energy, and talents to create awareness and understanding for others. They intentionally began to de-center dominance and the needs of those with dominant identities from their work. As a result, they started to reinvest their energy and efforts in ways that more closely aligned with their ability to be themselves, serve their communities, and engage in work that also allowed them to feel valued. This (re)alignment, however, did not result in a self-centered entitlement. Participants embodied an "ethic of love" (hooks, 1994) by recognizing their own privilege and speaking up in situations where they advocated on behalf of those with marginalized identities that they did not share.

As a result of campus spaces and services that failed to intentionally call Women of Color in and protect their well-being, participants sought and created other spaces and experiences in which they were acknowledged and appreciated. In doing this, they challenged peers, administrators, and faculty's lack of intersectional-praxis and consciousness that rendered them, their justice-related needs, and well-being invisible. This was especially apparent in spaces with White people. Their experiences are reflected

in Anzaldúa's (1999) writing, "the dominant white culture is killing us slowly with its ignorance. By taking away our self-determination, it has made us weak and empty" (p. 108). White spaces were detrimental to their well-being, in part, because they experienced othering. Instead of being diminished by the lack of awareness and acknowledgment from others, they largely opted out of these spaces and committed to other efforts.

As a result, participants intentionally identified spaces, relationships, and engagement in relation to social justice work that would allow them to be more authentically themselves. These spaces were largely multi-dimensional and allowed for the incorporation of multiple identities, experiences, and voices. They allowed for understanding different systems of domination simultaneously and for validation and healing. As Anzaldúa (1999) wrote, "I will not be shamed again. Nor will I shame myself." (p. 109). Participants began to embrace Anzaldúa's call to justice by addressing their own needs and finding space where they did not have to compartmentalize themselves, their emotions, or interests. Anzaldúa captured the importance for la Chicana to define herself, her experience, and learn herself and history to claim her "dignity and self-respect" (p. 109). Participants found spaces where they claimed their dignity and recognized the importance of self-definition and self-recognition.

Women-race based spaces proved to be particularly comforting to participants. Even in Jasmine's experience in a QTPOC space, which allowed her to explore multiple marginalized identities, Jasmine also encountered a politics of legitimacy in this space. This expands on Revilla's (2005) work about a Raza Womyn's group that also highlighted how Latinas did not always feel comfortable in a Latinx Queer organization

on campus; instead, they opted for Raza Womyn because it was a women's space. However, Jasmine, who also held some privileged identities, sometimes felt shamed by peers, because she was considered not legitimately queer, nor enough of a person of color.

In counterspaces, or self-preservation spaces, political and representational intersectionality collided. This prompted participants to create and engage in spaces where they could address their own issues and avoid fragmenting their identities (Crenshaw, 1991). These decisions and actions are reminiscent of creating borderland spaces of coalition to wrestle with the tensions between systems of oppression, culture, and identity (Anzaldúa, 1999). Here, women developed their consciousness, which was not possible on campus because they were excluded from dialogues. In multidimensional spaces, participants developed friendships; they also attempted to make sense of the cultural context in which they exist and the expectations placed on them as a result. These border spaces became part of a larger struggle toward developing a consciousness that was intersectional and was not possible in existing academic and single-identity social justice spaces on campus.

Participants identified multi-dimensional spaces like the Multicultural Center as places where conversations could be more complex and invited differing experiences. Women of Color spaces and friendships allowed them to be more fully themselves, engage in topics about which they cared, be challenged and validated, and share a community of support. This has been explained in the work of other scholars, such as Martínez Alemán (2000), who acknowledged how friendships among Women of Color validated them and increased their consciousness. Similarly, Croom et al. (2017), Revilla

(2005), and Lenzy (2019), and Chu (1986) underscored that race-gender focused spaces supported Black, Latina, and Asian women to develop holistically, explore issues on their own terms, and have peer support. Expanding on these studies, my study identified how exclusionary power dynamics (e.g., political intersectionality, structural intersectionality, representational intersectionality, ideological intersectional-marginalization) led to the creation of border spaces.

Additionally, participants found spaces to engage in social justice work through a multi-analysis lens (Croom, et al. 2017; Hernandez Rivera, 2020; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Lenzy, 2019a; Revilla, 2005; Revilla, 2010), which validated the fullness of who they are. Croom et al. (2017) and Revilla (2005), along with this study, demonstrated that multidimensional spaces of race-gender specific communities provided opportunities for women to explore multiple forms of oppression and how they interact with their lives. Notably, in interactions and relationships with Women of Color peers, participants also named that they were challenged by and made aware of their privilege. In this, they continued to build on a Mestiza consciousness by existing outside of a duality that renders them solely as oppressed. For most participants then, developing consciousness has meant grappling with how they understand all elements of who they are and how varying systems operate. In some instances, this acknowledgment was more complicated. Such as with Jasmine, who at times felt members of the QTPOC space shamed her for privilege or regulated how she performed her gender identity.

Nonetheless, these multi-dimensional spaces and relationships were ways that participants combatted the exclusion and compartmentalization of self that they experienced in their social justice advocacy and activism in most campus spaces and

activities. These spaces of their own fostered and exposed participants to the intersectional consciousness that they are prevented from developing in other spaces.

In addition to creating and identifying space, participants described how they combatted exclusion, particularly from those with privilege. Although they felt the need to delicately and tenderly engaged those with dominant identities, they were also unapologetic as they expressed themselves without concern for protecting the feelings and emotions of others. In doing this, they recognized how remaining authentic to who they were and that their ways of feeling and doing were valid. They resisted the gas-lighting and emotional control that they had been encouraged to accept. They challenged White supremacy, heteronormativity, hypermasculinity, and patriarchy on their own terms. In doing this, they moved closer to a Mestiza consciousness, which Anzaldùa (1997) wrote, “break[s] down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended” (p. 102). They challenged the idea that they are inferior. They rejected the notion that they should be comfortable with silence and actively challenged and shaped power relations.

Ultimately, participants in this study demonstrated that they are both impacted by and actively challenged power relations and dynamics that sought to render them invisible. They engaged in service to a campus community that, largely, had not acknowledged their needs, outside of the few Women of Color faculty members referenced. This resulted in a labor that became burdensome and exhaustive. Eventually, it was labor from which participants began to, or had the desire to, disengage. Participants experienced exclusion and oppression as a result of structural, representational, and political forms of intersectionality, as they were asked to prioritize

race in their advocacy. This may, in part, be connected to systemic lack of representation of those who share their ideological and experiential needs and patterns of Whiteness that informed curricula (Crenshaw, 1991).

Representational dominance of Whiteness was also a pervasive issue in student organizations, social justice groups, and identity centers. This dominance both displaced the interests and needs of Women of Color and asked them to be in service to the needs of White people. In this way, Women of Color were invisible and dominant representation led to prioritizing the political interests of White people (Crenshaw, 1991). Women of Color also experienced political intersectionality through interpersonal interactions with peers who possessed privileged identities that Women of Color did not. They lacked awareness of how their White fragility, social class, heteronormativity, and/or patriarchal dominance forced Women of Color into educator and caretaker roles. Once again, the interests of those with more privilege, even in social justice spaces, became the priority.

Finally, an absence of an intersectional sensibility was widespread in the campus community, contributing to a culture where Women of Color were unacknowledged. This also manifested in interpersonal interactions that were rooted in racist-sexist oppressive ideologies about Women of Color. Over time, participants challenged this culture by developing a Mestiza consciousness that embraced an intersectional sensibility and experience, and challenged the position/roles to which those with privilege and power had relegated them. They (re)shaped their understanding of activist work and began to understand themselves more fully as oppressed and oppressors, working from a place of action and honoring their feelings, emotions, and experiences in the process.

Implications

Based upon the conclusions drawn from this study, there are a number of implications for Women of Color students, theory and analysis, future research, methodology and design, institutional leaders and faculty, and campus practitioners. I have organized these implications accordingly and discuss how to address and utilize findings from this study to create more equitable experiences for Women of Color in their activist work on college campuses, and in their collegiate experiences more broadly.

For Women of Color Students

I want to encourage undergraduate Women of Color who are committed to serving their communities and transforming their institutions to know that their desire for change does not have to come at the expense of their well-being. As many participants indicated, existing; being unapologetic; and taking care of oneself, particularly as a person who experiences multiple forms of oppression; are radical acts of resistance. I encourage Women of Color engaged in activism and advocacy to participate in these acts in ways that are authentic to who they are. I also want to caution Women of Color in participating in spaces that exploit their efforts. Committing to social justice work will likely entail mental and emotional labor and call on them to educate others in the struggle. However, Women of Color should be aware that participation in spaces that requires this of them may not consider their needs. They should not have to continuously bend their needs to serve those most dominant, whether it is white people, white women, white men, men of color, or any others with dominant identities.

Additionally, Women of Color should establish expectations of others about how they should be treated based on their needs and identities. Although power dynamics

sometimes forced participants to engage in self-sacrificial behaviors, participants also created boundaries. They became clear with others about their needs, refused to be mistreated, were unapologetic, and remained authentic to who they are. In so doing, they were able to better navigate relationships, their activist work, and preserve and protect their well-being. They acknowledged power dynamics present in relationships or group spaces, or left a space when their standards have been compromised, neglected, and disrespected. Women of Color should also identify spaces and communities where they can take care of themselves, explore their activist work, and feel whole. For many participants, this meant finding or creating Women of Color spaces and relationships, or at minimum, spaces that would acknowledge their varying oppressed identities. It could also mean exploring writers, thinkers, and artists who can validate their experiences and/or allow for the development of intersectional consciousness. Additionally, both participants in this research, and Women of Color more broadly, should consider tapping into mental health resources, particularly therapists on campus or resources outside of the campus community. Overall, Women of Color should be emboldened to see their holistic well-being as part of their activist struggle.

Theory and Analysis

Patricia Hill Collins (2019) highlighted the importance of placing intersectionality in "dialogic engagement" with other theoretical concepts in order to build on it as an analytic sensibility. My study expands upon this understanding. Using cultural intuition as an analytic lens, I was able to use pre-existing professional and intellectual knowledge to understand the data. More specifically, I identified how Gloria Analdúa's (1997) concept of la Mestiza consciousness emerged within the data. Cultural intuition allowed

me to understand the ramifications of intersectional oppression as experienced interpersonally, and then, internalized by participants, which eventually led me, and them, to explore Mestiza consciousness.

Intersectional oppression rooted in racist-sexist ideologies informed how Women of Color engaged with and were treated by others. Ideological intersectional oppression expands on how intersectionality can be used to examine interpersonal interactions Women of Color have, and what these interactions mean for how they maneuver and experience oppression. Consequently, putting Mestiza consciousness in dialogue with intersectionality allowed for an understanding of how this maneuvering occurs. Additionally, it builds on Mestiza consciousness "interculturally," as Anzaldúa (1999) suggested, through identifying how it emerged in the lives of women outside of a Chicana and Latina diaspora.

The stories and experiences of participants demonstrate the deep connection between intersectionality and Mestiza consciousness. Participants made agentic decisions informed by an evolving Mestiza consciousness in which they sought a liberatory space, one that existed in the very intersection where they were impacted. This space can be understood as a border space where participants move toward this consciousness. They made choices to act in a way that was more aligned with their being and who they want to be. In doing so, they work toward wholeness, healing, authenticity, self-determination, solidarity, pluralistic thinking that honors complexity, and intersectional consciousness and praxis. These were all aspects that were largely stifled in their activist work and at the institution at large. Their stories reveal how intersectionality and Mestiza consciousness build on one another. This expands on Collins's (2019) theorizing, who

explained that “the spatial metaphor of the borderland” identified by Anzaldúa “deepens understandings of intersecting power relations” and social relations (p. 33). It also furthers the understanding of the conditions that exist for Women of Color and why they engage in and develop multi-dimensional spaces. Multi-dimensional spaces are those that allow for the exploration of power and identities on more than one axis of oppression.

Participants experienced intersectional oppression in an institution that had not prioritized intersectional efforts and ideologies that are needed to truly transform the campus. A lack of an intersectional grounding created an environment that was hostile and exclusionary for participants, and one that exploited their identities, knowledge, and care. This resulted in the need for participants to work through and develop a Mestiza consciousness, so that they may resist marginalization, exclusion, and compartmentalization. In addition, through this, they were more likely to identify the space of marginalization as one of liberation, and what hooks (1989) may refer to as a space of “radical openness” (p. 19).

Future Research

There are a number of questions that emerged throughout the study that future research should address. First, Women of Color activists, and even Women of Color more generally, are persisting in institutions of higher learning, at the expense of their emotional and mental well-being. Future research studies should continue to examine the relationship between activist work, advocacy, and the mental health of Women of Color students. Researchers should also consider how their consciousness about social justice issues influences their well-being. Most participants in this study were near the end of their college career. Research conducted at different phases of the college trajectory

could provide deeper insights into how Women of Color are being exploited by institutions of higher learning, and what this may mean for the well-being of Women of Color.

In this study, participants described inclusion and equity efforts on campus as largely education-based, catering to the awareness of predominantly White people. Moreover, the historical legacy of White supremacy and White dominance on campus created conditions in which participants had to prioritize and center race in their advocacy, future research studies should explore how Women of Color might engage activism at minority-serving institutions and women's colleges, and at institutions that were established more recently.

More studies need to explore the impact of the lack of opportunities in authentic inclusion and equity work for People of Color. Similarly, projects should be developed to examine the role of equity and inclusion divisions and departments, and whether they are accessible and serve the needs of marginalized students, particularly those with intersecting identities. Additionally, scholars should research specific social justice spaces and student organizations on campus and the experiences or perceptions Women of Color have of these spaces. Research should also continue to explore race-gender focused spaces on campus (Croom et al., 2017; Hernandez Rivera, 2020; Revilla, 2004), why and how these spaces emerge, how they serve Women of Color, and the challenges in maintaining them.

Researchers should identify institutions that have institutionalized efforts that support and advocate for the needs of Women of Color, and seek to understand the experiences of Women of Color at those institutions. Scholars have highlighted how

Women of Color have been excluded and made invisible in campus activism and in the larger campus community (Hollis, 2019; Lenzy, 2019b; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012; Revilla, 2010). Additional research in this area remains critical to illuminating the need to develop intersectional praxis, which I describe below, to create more equitable campus environments.

Participants also employed strategies to center their well-being in activist efforts. As such, researchers should consider conducting studies on how undergraduate Women of Color resist marginalization more specifically. Identifying how they craft and participate in multi-dimensional spaces, engage authentically, and community-build on college campuses. Further, this study found that Women of Colors' consciousness around intersectional oppression and intersectional praxis increased throughout their collegiate experience. Exploring this through an ethnographic approach would provide a deeper analysis of this finding. Finally, participants lacked opportunities to develop an intersectional consciousness at the K-12 level. In some cases, they lacked earlier education to understand single forms of oppression. Researchers should examine the experiences of young Women of Color at the K-12 level and how curriculum, teachers, and administrators support an intersectional understanding of systems of oppression and how that may impact students.

Methodology and Design

In addition to the recommendations for future research, there are implications from this study for how research is conducted. I attempted to conduct this study with as much reciprocity as possible for participants. I considered how they could benefit from the research process and how I could examine and address some of the challenges they

had faced. Conducting research that would further contribute to the exclusion, othering, and de-valuing of Women of Color experiences would work against what projects, such as this one, intended to do. Considering what participants in this study had already experienced in college and in their lives generally, developing a study that reflects on and responds to this reality is important. Researchers doing work with Women of Color participants should intentionally think about how neglecting their lived realities causes harm in the research process. It is not enough to want to illuminate their realities or unearth their stories; we must consider how to construct research processes that can validate, empower, and serve participants.

Participants were repeatedly surprised at how I conducted this research study saying: “I didn’t know you could do research like this.” Many participated in other research studies that primarily requested information from them with no follow-up or interest in who they actually are. Because of this, I believe it is necessary for researchers to consider how they intentionally care for the well-being of Women of Color throughout the research process. I approached my time with participants with explanations of what would occur at every stage of the process, what they could expect, and continuously checked in to see how they were feeling throughout. Participants underscored that the research process was “healing” for them, demonstrating a certain degree of reciprocity. The opportunity to dialogue with me as a conversation allowed me to ask about their experiences and share my own, which supported their understanding of themselves. Researchers should consider how they connect with Women of Color participants; conducting research in ways that are purported as objective or neutral could prevent participants from engaging fully as themselves.

Sista circles were also places where they could reflect, process, grow, experience validation and love, laugh, have shared community, and engage in healing from the oppressive experiences they described. At times this meant letting them steer the conversation so that they could have their own personal needs met. Participants also appreciated the level of care and investment in their comfort through sharing in sista circles over a meal I had prepared. This level of comfort contributed to their openness in the process. I was also cognizant of this and reminded them that they could remove anything from their narrative after sharing. I placed their comfort and security, over my own interests as a researcher.

Additionally, participants shared that they felt supported and heard due to my effort at bringing them in through different stages of the process and meeting with them to review their narratives and findings. They felt affirmed, but also rattled by what they had not realized they were exposed to. We engaged in this process together, and through that, they recognized that their experiences were situated in a larger collective struggle. This was both validating and dis-heartening for them. As a result, I provided space for them to process this in our last meeting. I also created individual reading lists for each woman, based on what she articulated grappling with. I hoped that the list would allow her to continue self-exploration and development. In an academic culture where there is a pressure to *publish or perish*. A publish or perish culture can force scholars to produce work quickly, for fear of not being promoted or being perceived as unproductive. This work can then lack intentionality or fail to actually serve the community upon which it is focused. Thus, it becomes increasingly critical to create research that reveals, recognizes,

and honors the challenges of participants by creating research projects that support their realities.

Institutional Leaders and Faculty

There are several implications for institutional leaders, including those who work specifically in equity and inclusion areas. First, it is imperative that leaders acknowledge the historical legacy of the institution, particularly how it may have excluded marginalized communities on campus. Historical exclusion at institutions like Mizzou continue to shape and inform campus culture (Hurtado, 1992), which reifies oppressive ideologies and practices that marginalize students. “Acknowledging a past history of exclusion implies an institutional willingness to actively shed its exclusionary past. Such efforts may be even more effective if they are coupled with a clearly articulated vision for a more inclusive future.” (Hurtado et al., 1998, p. 284). Acknowledging this can de-center whiteness and remove the burden from students, and those educators who work with them, to justify racism (Harris & Patton, 2017). This can also challenge how Women of Color have been remembered in the historical legacy of the institution, where they have been largely invisible. Additionally, inequity functions in myriad ways within an institution. Acknowledging racist and sexist legacies can be a useful strategy in addressing a hostile and exclusive campus for Women of Color (Hurtado et al.,1998; McElderry & Hernandez Rivera, 2019). This kind of acknowledgement also requires White members of the community to reflect on and examine how their racial identity impacts how they navigate, lead, and execute their work (Beatty et al., 2020; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012).

Leaders must keep in mind that Women of Color faculty and staff are often already taxed and marginalized in institutions of higher learning, and that leadership decisions can further exacerbate these realities (Hernández & Morales, 1999; Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Pertuz, 2017; Sánchez et al., 2020; Seo & Hinton, 2009; Singh et al.,1995; Turner, 2002). Prioritizing hiring, retaining, uplifting, and supporting Women of Color faculty and administrators on campus is critical (Duran, 2016), as they proved to be instrumental to the development of participants. However, hiring more Women of Color faculty does not eliminate the need for others at the institution to engage in meaningful intersectional practices (Lenzy, 2019b) or take a comprehensive approach to equity (Turner et al., 2011). Representation of faculty of Color alone will not create the equitable environment that students need (Hurtado et al, 1998).

How are students who are Women of Color, queer Women of Color, low-income Women of Color, undocumented Women of Color, and Women of Color with undocumented guardians being served, protected, and treated? How are they also being exploited by the institution that gains from their representation, service, and efforts? Participant stories illuminated that their work on campus has largely come in the form of creating awareness for those with dominant identities, particularly White people who are peers, faculty, and administrators. They have been employed (with costs, not monetary compensation) in this educative labor because of the negligence of institutional leaders and equity efforts that are limited to creating awareness. Institutional leaders at the highest levels should actively gain the knowledge and tools needed to lead an equitable community. They should also learn about, adopt, and implement approaches, particularly on predominantly White campuses, that are anti-racist (Kandaswamy, 2017; Kishimoto,

2018; Law, 2017; Welton et al., 2018). An inability to do this creates performative diversity work, as opposed to a true commitment to an equitable campus (Ahmed, 2007; Hurtado et al., 1998).

Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts should center the needs of those who are marginalized on campus. Participants wanted a more financially accessible campus, more faculty of Color, curriculum where they could engage more wholly as themselves, and initiatives and efforts that support their well-being and healing and those of their communities. In this regard, faculty can intentionally develop curriculum that engages an intersectional consciousness, as opposed to engaging in single-axis understanding and analysis (Christian, 1989; Goodstein & Gyant, 1990; Hirshfield & Joseph, 2012; Kim, 2001; Krouse, 1997; Lee, 2000; Vaccaro & Camba-Kelsay, 2016). This is particularly important as participants described the educational labor they were forced to carry out in the classroom because of anti-racist actions, heteronormativity, or a lack of intersectional analysis. Thus, faculty should also engage in challenging oppressive dynamics through their pedagogical practices so that marginalized students do not become responsible for their negligence (Rhoads & Valadez, 2016).

Institutional leaders should prioritize educating faculty on developing teaching and learning curriculum that engages anti-racism. Additionally, as students participated in efforts of justice that often fell short of their desired goals, opportunities are needed that provide students decision-making power within the larger institution (Hurtado et al., 1998). One way this can occur is by including Women of Color in creating assessments for curriculum.

As participants underscored how institutional culture exploited their knowledge and awareness of social justice, providing compensation to students for their labor to the institution in equity and diversity should be a priority. This should include educational initiatives in which students are invited to participate, the use of their image for representation purposes, and committee work in which they participate. Finally, because identity centers on campus are often under-staffed and under-funded (Harris & Patton, 2017; Hurtado et al, 1998; Stewart & Bridges, 2011), it is not surprising that there are limited services that actually target the needs of those who sit at the intersections of multiple forms of oppression. This structural issue creates conditions in which practitioners are taxed to do more, often with less.

Thus, institutional leaders should adequately staff and fund these spaces and ensure that those who are hired within these spaces have a proven understanding of and engagement with intersectional praxis and their importance to support students. Crenshaw (1991) emphasized the importance of understanding how racism, sexism, and capitalism interconnect to shape the experiences of Women of Color who have experienced interpersonal violence and abuse. In doing so she stated, “intervention strategies based solely on the experiences of women who do not share the same class or race backgrounds will be of limited help to women who because of race and class face different obstacles” (p. 1246). Considering this, an intersectional form of praxis would recognize and seek to combat multiple forms of oppression simultaneously and work to ensure that initiatives, services, support mechanisms, and structures are reflective of this.

Implications for Practitioners in the Fields of Equity and Inclusion

At the conclusion of this study, participants shared that they wished they would have known earlier what they know now. They wanted practitioners to warn them about the perils of being exploited in institutions of higher learning. As a previous practitioner, I can attest that it requires a balance of optimism, skepticism, and exercising a realistic outlook about one's institutional culture. Conveying the need for balance to students can support their activist engagement, while also encouraging them to prioritize their well-being.

Practitioners working in identity-based centers and services should consider how they are supporting students with multiple marginalized identities (Negrete & Purcell, 2011; Kumarhiro, 2001). Representation of staff within identity centers, building intentional relationships and outreach to Women of Color on campus, creating targeted services and initiatives to support Women of Color, and approaching anti-racist approaches to justice work are all needed. Practitioners should critically explore their own identities and how these identities inform their work and relationship-building with others. Participants did not trust most (all?) White people, and at times, men of Color. Thus, practitioners whose racial and/or gender identities are different from Women of Color should educate themselves about those differences in identities and experiences and how they can build relationships more intentionally with Women of Color. Women of Color practitioners should also be mindful of how Women of Color experience oppression and interpersonal dynamics differently, and educate themselves about the experiences across groups, sexuality, class, citizenship, and other identities.

Participants often described White dominant spaces as those in which they did not feel comfortable. As such, it is imperative for practitioners in these spaces to work hard to intentionally develop relationships with those who may not trust them. Additionally, as students grapple to understand privilege and marginalization within student organizations, advisors can support students to explore and understand their identities and how they exclude those with multiple marginalized identities. Advisors and practitioners working directly with students in identity and inclusion work are also responsible for preventing and intervening in exclusionary practices. In cases like Jasmine's, advisors should pay special attention to how legitimacy and authenticity politics emerge in student organizations, while also being mindful of how students can examine privilege. In cases like those of Dope, Mala, Sehar, and Payal, advisors can address how additional labor is placed on students even in identity-based organizations and spaces.

Practitioners should also be educated and mindful about how Women of Color may engage in self-sacrificial behaviors and challenge students to prioritize their well-being. This can occur through individual relationships formed, but also through workshops and programs that acknowledge this for Women of Color specifically. Facilitating workshops that engage the work of Women of Color writers and thinkers and that focus on developing a Mestiza consciousness, intersectional-consciousness, well-being, and healing can support the experiences of Women of Color more intentionally. Workshops and presentations that complicate the understanding of activist and advocacy efforts and consider the historical legacy of these efforts at a particular institution may also support students like those in this study. Creating opportunities for students to connect with Women of Color mentors can also be important (Domingue, 2015; Liang et

al., 2006). Practitioners should not limit their scope to campus in this regard; they should engage the surrounding community, as Women of Color faculty and administrators on campus contend with providing additional labor to students, partly in the form of mentorship.

Institutional culture and interpersonal interactions on campus significantly jeopardized participants' mental and emotional well-being. Additionally, participants' experiences prior to arriving to the institution influenced their well-being, particularly for those who did not have the opportunity or support to reflect on those experiences. All participants also experienced or observed some form of interpersonal violence in their past, but did not feel comfortable accessing services and resources on campus. Those working in counseling and wellness areas should commit to serve and reach out to Women of Color on campus, recognizing that these students may not reach out to them, but need culturally appropriate support. Anti-racist approaches that de-center whiteness and promote outreach are required to ensure that Women of Color feel safe and comfortable in accessing these spaces and efforts. Ultimately, institutions need to foster intersectional praxis that is ideologically aligned with a desire to create more equitable experiences for students.

Conclusion

Institutions of higher learning, such as the University of Missouri, which espouse a diversity rhetoric of respect and inclusion need to challenge how they have approached addressing inequity on campus. The participants in this study sought to advocate for more equitable campus spaces, and experienced marginalization within the campus community and toward their activism (Lenzyb, 2019; Linder, 2011; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012;

Revilla, 2004). If higher education institutions are committed to equity and justice, they must bring these values in alignment with their practice. Justice work requires that it does no further harm, and does not marginalize and exploit students who deserve to be treated with dignity.

Although the University of Missouri has a division dedicated to equity, inclusion, and diversity, as well as a number of social justice centers on campus, students continue to question this "commitment" to equity as harm continues to be done to marginalized students. This is partly because institutional leaders make decisions that negatively impact and do not consider marginalized students' needs and voices. This has been seen over the past few years, but it crystalized more recently when the campus community learned the coordinators of the social justice centers positions would be replaced with new positions because of a restructuring. This restructuring is still unclear, but what is significant is that there is a lack of consideration for what students who engage in these centers might want or need, which continues to cultivate distrust between marginalized students and campus administrators. These kinds of events further underscore the findings and importance of this work and also highlight how the institution is again sitting at a critical position in relation to how it is perceived by marginalized students who are conscious and actively seeking change on campus.

It is especially important that, in this moment, we consider how Women of Color are marginalized in the campus community and in spaces that should serve them and their needs. This kind of exclusion has consequences for their mental and emotional wellness. If high-ranking administrators are not invested in listening to marginalized students, particularly those who experience intersectional marginality, how will they know what

their needs are? I urge institutional leaders, faculty members, and practitioners, particularly those who possess privilege and power within their institution, to intervene in the exploitation, degradation, and silencing of Women of Color on campus, at all levels.

In this oppressive environment, the Women of Color in this study strove to find themselves and identify their needs in conditions where this was difficult, if not impossible. They did so while working to transform their campus community through an unwavering commitment that is rooted in a love for their communities, and a possibility for something better. Although they sometimes sacrificed their needs in their advocacy and activist efforts, they were also unapologetic and true to themselves. Through identifying people and support networks, engaging in self-reflection, creating boundaries, nurturing their well-being, and pursuing self-definition, participants claimed their humanity.

The Women of Color in this study have shown themselves to be moving through an evolving consciousness that embraces complexity and fullness of self. I hope they can continue on that journey and wish more for them than what they were forced to accept in their college experience. They deserve it. My hope is that they, other undergraduate Women of Color, and those who seek to support them continue to encourage this kind of radical self-love, one that has the power to heal and restore what they have been deprived of, and the ability to be, exist, and choose what's best for themselves on their own terms. Finally, I hope the women in this study and other Women of Color who find themselves in their stories, continue to work from a place of love, forgetting not, that you deserve that love as well.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Letter (Draft)

August TBD, 2019

Dear Student Name,

Hope you are doing well. After speaking with (Name), they explained that you might be interested in participating in the research study I am working on. The study aims to examine the experiences of Women of Color who are doing work on campus to create more equitable environments through their activism and work with different communities.

As the researcher for this study, I will be leading the investigation. I would like to meet in person and gather your potential insights on my ideas about data collection, which currently consist of written statements from participants, two one-on-one discussions with me as the investigator, and two group discussions with all participants.

Your participation in the study would be completely voluntary and you would be free to stop participating even if you change your mind after agreeing. Please email me back if you are interested in participating, or you can also reach me at (201) 988-4718. If you have any questions about the study or participation in it, you can feel free to contact me.

If you have questions about your rights, questions, concerns or anything else, you can also contact the University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board. They can be contacted by phone (573-882-9585) or email (umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu). Their website can also be accessed here: http://www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm.

I look forward to hearing from you,
Stephanie

Appendix B

Consent Form (Draft)

Introduction
You are invited to participate in this research study focused on the activist experiences of Women of Color. Before participation can begin, it is important that you understand why I am conducting this research, its purpose, potential risks, benefits and how your identity will be protected. Before you can participate in this study, your consent is required and therefore, the information below allows you to be informed about your role and rights throughout this process. After reading, you can feel to pose any unanswered questions. You can then decide if you would like to consent to participation by signing the end of this form. You can also take time to make your decision and contact me when you are ready.

Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of how Women of Color advance agendas of justice on campus. The current title of the project is "We've Been Doing This!: Women of Color Advancing Agendas of Justice on Campus." This title will likely change or evolve after the study is completed. The study will focus on how Women of Color power shapes the experiences of Women of Color in their activism and experiences and relationship with others.

Your Potential Role in the Study
If you volunteer to participate in this study, I will ask you to do the following:

- Write two testimonios (testimonies) about your experience that are responding to specific prompts and questions focused around the purpose of the research.
- Participate in two pláticas (discussions) with myself as the investigator about your experience. Each testimonio would be submitted before the plática takes place.
- Participate in two "Sista Circles" – group discussions with the other participants. These circles will take place after each round of pláticas is completed.
- It is also possible that I may ask to observe you in a setting where you are doing activist or advocacy related work on campus.

*Although not a requirement for participation, I will ask for permission to audio record all discussions, which will be securely stored on my computer. Your name will be replaced with a pseudonym on all documents. Observations would not be recorded. Conversations that are recorded will also remain in a secure and password protected location.

Risks
Potential risks include potential discomfort or frustration in sharing your story or talking about difficult topics as it relates to identity, privilege and power.

Benefits
The benefit of participating in the study is that the experiences of Women of Color in college and university settings can become more visible in issues of equity and justice in

higher education, as well as the ways Women of Color organize on college and university settings. By participating in Sista Circles, participants may gain validation and insights from other participants. Participants' insights will also be shared with other Women of Color in the community who could benefit from their learning and contribute their own knowledge to larger conversations about activism and equity. Finally, participants can potentially feel validated and understood by sharing their stories and experiences.

Confidentiality

Your name and identity will remain confidential and will not be shared with anyone outside of myself as the researcher. A fictitious name (pseudonym), will be used to mask your identity.

This form, audio recordings, and all other documents will remain in secure, locked locations.

Closing

Participation is completely voluntary and if in the process of the interview you decide not to partake in this research that can be communicated freely to myself (Stephanie Hernandez Rivera), as the primary investigator. If you do not have any questions, you can feel free to sign this form, providing me with your consent for your participation in what I detailed above. If the research is published and you would like to know, feel free to also include your email contact. If follow up questions arise, you can feel free to contact me at stephaniemarie5887@gmail.com.

If you have questions at any time about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time. See my contact information below.

Stephanie Hernandez Rivera
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis
University of Missouri
hernandezsm@mail.missouri.edu
(201) 988-4718

Jeni Hart, PhD (Project Advisor)
Dean of Graduate School and Vice Provost for Graduate Studies
Graduate School
University of Missouri
210 Jesse Hall
hartj@missouri.edu
(573) 884-1402

You may contact the University of Missouri Campus Institutional Review Board if you have questions about your rights, concerns, or complaints as a research participant. You can contact the campus Institutional Review Board directly by phone or email. See contact information below.

483 McReynolds Hall
Columbia, MO 65211
Phone Number: (573) 882-9585
Email: umcresearchcirb@missouri.edu
Website: http://www.research.missouri.edu/cirb/index.htm

Appendix C

Testimonio Questions and Prompts I

Hello (Name),

Thank you again for your participation in this study. Your insights and experiences will be important in informing the practices of students who connect to your experience. As mentioned previously, the testimonio is an opportunity for you to write freely and tell your own story by answering the prompts and questions provided below. For this study, I define a testimonio as: "a first-person account by the person themselves" that reflects on particular challenges they have experienced, how they have emerged from these challenges and/or marginalization, and what they have learned or gained as a result. Their story and experience can then contribute to a greater understanding about power dynamics and relations. You can decide the length of your testimonio and feel free to provide as much narration and detail as you find appropriate. Additionally, please send me the testimonio before our first plática on TBD. Below you can find the prompts and questions; if you have any questions, please feel free to contact me prior to writing. Happy writing!

1. What identities and experiences have shaped your understanding of inequity and injustice.
2. Tell me the story about your introduction to activism and advocacy?
    a. Did it occur prior to higher education?
    b. Were you or the issues important to you represented in the activism and advocacy you first learned of?
3. Tell me a story about when you participated in activist/advocate work or action on campus? Why did you engage in this work? What challenges did it pose?

Appendix D

Plática Protocol for Participants I

Procedure:
Thank you for being here with me today, taking time out of your schedule, and for agreeing to participate in the study. It is really appreciated. We will start by both reading the testimonio you developed based on the questions/prompts I sent you. Feel free to write notes or pose questions you might ask even of yourself as you read. I will be doing the same as I read. After reading, we can start with any notes or questions you had of your own testimono. I will also ask questions based on your testimonio and other questions that I have for all participants in the study. This will be conversational in nature and if at any point you have questions for me, feel free to interrupt me to pose them. You can choose to opt-out of answering any question without explanation. We can also take a break at any time or potentially pick up another day if necessary. If it is okay, I would like to record the interview and will then transcribe it verbatim. I will also send you the transcript once I have completed it. It will be kept in a secure folder on my password protected computer and will be confidential. I will also need a pseudonym from you to protect your identity. It can be any name of your choosing. If you don't have any questions, we can get started.

Questions:

1. What pseudonym would you like to use for the study? What pronouns would you like to use for the study?
2. What was it like writing your testimonio? What were some takeaways that you gained from your own story and experiences?
3. What are the issues based on race, gender, and other identities of importance to you that you think need to be addressed on campus? What communities do you feel currently aren't being served in activist efforts that you are a part of?
4. Tell me about a time when you experienced oppression on campus.
    a. How would you describe the oppression you experience on campus?
5. What challenges do you encounter in your activism and advocacy on campus?
    a. Institutionally?
    b. Interpersonally?
    c. Intrapersonal?
    d. Recount an experience.
6. How do you combat or address these challenges?
7. Recall a time where you felt most empowered in your activist work. Tell me a little about why.

Closing:
Thank you for participating today. Your experiences contribute greatly to the understanding of this topic. I will send you the transcript as soon as I complete it and you can provide me a specific email address if it is different than the one I currently have. Also, feel free to read through the transcript and expand on anything you feel you want to

further explore or that is pertinent to the study. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me directly. You can also contact the Institutional Review Board if you have other questions with the contact information found in the original recruitment email I sent you. I will soon be sending you the questions and prompts for the second testimonio and after you complete it we can set up the second discussion.

Appendix E

Sista Circle Protocol I

Procedure:
Thank you all for being here today, taking time out of your schedule, and for agreeing to participate in the study. It is truly appreciated. If we can start with everyone introducing themselves, after this, we will create community values as to how we can engage in discussion today.

My role today will be one of facilitator, participant, observer, and recorder. I will pose questions based on the testimonios and pláticas that have been completed thus far; however, if you have questions of each other, please feel free to ask them as they emerge. Engaging in discussion can be difficult, particularly as it relates to ensuring everyone's voice is heard. With that being said, I want everyone to attempt to feel conscious of this as we engage, while also not feeling as though you are limiting yourself and what you have to say. You also don't have to feel as though you have to answer a question(s), similar to our pláticas. I have provided you with small journals so feel free to write notes or pose questions you might have as everyone is speaking. Just be cautious to not include the names of others. If you do, I will remove them from the transcripts and any publications and presentations or I will replace them with the pseudonym selected earlier in the data collection process. The journal will be something you keep and is one of the benefits of participating in the study: being able to learn, grow and share with one another and having the space to write anything down that you wish. Because I will ask you to bring the journal to the second circle, I will offer to hold onto it for you if you think you might forget it. Along with questions, I have also brought excerpts of either your testimonios or our plática to get us started in the discussion. You can choose to opt-out of answering any question without explanation. With permission from everyone, I would like to record the discussion and will then transcribe it verbatim. I will also send you all the transcript once I have completed it. It will be kept in a secure folder on my password protected computer and will be confidential. If you don't have any questions, we can get started.

[Distribute excerpts for participants to read and share with one another.]

Questions:

1. As a _____ woman on campus doing activist and advocacy work I feel…
2. How has your experience doing activist and advocacy work been shaped by others?
3. What have you learned about activism and advocacy on campus that you have utilized in your own social justice work?
4. What challenges do you all experience as Women of Color, including other identities, in doing this work? campus barriers do you experience in doing this work, whether personal, in your sphere of influence, or institutional?

5. What areas and resources on campus have supported your work? What areas or parts of the institution have posed challenges in your work?
6. What rejuvenates you in doing activist and advocacy work on campus?

Closing:
Thank you for participating today. I hope you will get something out of today. I ask that you take a second to reflect on what the experience was like for you today in your journal. I will send you the transcript as soon as I complete it and you can provide me a specific email address if it is different than the one I currently have. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me directly. I will be following up with all of you soon to schedule our second plática.

Appendix F

Testimonio Questions and Prompts II

Hello (Name),

Thank you again for your participation in this study. Below you will find the next set of questions and prompts to complete your second testimonio. Again, you can decide the length of your testimonio and feel free to provide as much narration and detail as you find to be appropriate. As with the first testimonio, I will need you to send me the testimonio before our second plática on TBD. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me prior to writing. Happy writing!

1. What are the most pressing issues you face as a _____ woman on campus?
2. Recall a time(s), on campus, when you were able to center all of your salient identities in your activist and advocacy?
    a. How did it make you feel?
    b. What did you learn from the experience(s)?
    c. How was this experience different from others you've been a part of (explain in detail)?
3. How does the institution, campus spaces, or the classroom environment address your identities and the issues you encounter?

Appendix G

Plática Protocol for Participants II

Procedure:
Thank you for being here with me today, I appreciate you sending the testimonio along. The process for this plática will be similar to the first. We will start by both reading the testimonio you developed based on the questions/prompts I sent you. Feel free to write notes or pose questions you might ask even of yourself as you read. I will be doing the same as I read. After reading, we can start with any notes or questions you had of your own testimono. I will also ask questions based on your testimonio and other questions that I have for all participants in the study. This will be conversational in nature and if at any point you have questions for me, feel free to interrupt me to pose them. You can choose to opt-out of answering any question without explanation. We can also take a break at any time or potentially pick up another day if necessary. Again, I would like to record the interview and will then transcribe it verbatim. I will also send you the transcript once I have completed it. It will be kept in a secure folder on my password protected computer and will be confidential. If you don't have any questions, we can get started.

Questions:

1. What was it like writing your second testimonio? What were some takeaways that you gained from your own story/experiences?
2. In what capacities have you worked with other students on campus to address equity and inclusion?
    a. How did these efforts form?
3. Tell me a "success" you've experienced in working with others.
    a. How did this feel?
    b. What lessons did you learn from this experience?
4. Tell me an experience where you were frustrated working with or collaborating with others.
    a. How did this feel?
    b. What lessons did you learn?
5. How have you worked with or within any groups on campus to address issues of equity and inclusion?
    a. What's your or has been your role within said group?
    b. How do these groups address issues of importance to you, if they do?
    c. What strategies do you utilize within these groups?
    d. What challenges do you encounter with groups?
    e. What does collaboration with other groups look like if it does occur?
6. At what point did you start working with others to address injustice?
    a. What benefits have you found from doing this?
    b. What challenges have you found in doing this?
    c. How is working outside of your salient identity groups different than within?

Closing:
Thank you for participating today. I will send you the transcript as soon as I complete it. Also, feel free to read through the transcript and expand on anything you feel you want to further explore or that is pertinent to the study. I will be in touch with you soon about the Sista Circle.

Appendix H

Sista Circle Protocol II

Procedure:
Hello everyone, thanks for being here today! This Sista Circle will be similar to the first one in terms of functionality, of course with different questions. Again, engaging in discussion can be difficult, particularly as it relates to ensuring everyone's voice is heard, with that being said, I want everyone to attempt to feel conscious of this as we engage, while also not feeling as though you are limiting yourself and what you have to say. You also don't have to feel as though you have to answer a question(s), similar to our pláticas. I have your journals with me today. Along with questions, I have also brought excerpts of either your testimonios or our plática to get us started in the discussion. You can choose to opt-out of answering any question without explanation. With permission from everyone, I would like to record the discussion and will then transcribe it verbatim. I will also send you all the transcript once I have completed it. It will be kept in a secure folder on my password protected computer and will be confidential. If you don't have any questions, we can get started.

Questions:

1. How do you decide if you will work with someone or with a group towards advancing equity and inclusion efforts?
2. How does working with other students look depending on the setting?
3. What role does the institution play in deciding to work with others?
4. When I ask about your experience working with those in said group, think of the first word or phrase that comes to mind:
    a. Men of Color
    b. White women
    c. PoC Mixed-Gender
    d. All women
    e. Women in your own ethnic and racial group
    f. Women of Color
5. What benefits and challenges have you found in working with others?
6. Describe how collaborating with others has had an impact? How has collaboration influenced the issues you care about?
7. What histories/stories of other Women of Color have you learned of where collaboration has occurred? When did you learn of these histories/stories?

Closing:
Thank you for participating today. I hope you will get something out of today. I ask that you take a second to reflect on what the experience was like for you today in your journal. I will send you the transcript as soon as I complete it and you can provide me a specific email address if it is different than the one I currently have. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me directly. I will be following up with all of you soon to schedule a final Sista Circle where I will present the findings of the study and ask for

your feedback and thoughts, and determine the best way to present the findings to the community.

VITA

Stephanie Hernandez Rivera is a Boricua woman and native of New Jersey. From an early age, she was encouraged by her mother to prioritize her education. Stephanie's own college experience deeply influenced her desire to work in and also continue her education beyond the attainment of her bachelor's degree from William Paterson University. This environment became the space where she began to explore issues of justice critically and examine oppressive power forces. Wanting to learn more, Stephanie went on to pursue and attain a master's degree in Women's and Gender Studies from Rutgers University. After a few years working in higher education doing equity and diversity work, Stephanie recognized the minimal research and support of the experiences of students with marginalized identities and multiple marginalized identities more specifically. She then decided to pursue a doctorate full-time at the University of Missouri to support the experiences of these very students. As a previous campus administrator, Stephanie's work emphasizes the importance of improving practice in higher education. With sacrifice, persistence, and support from her village, Stephanie completed a Ph.D. Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis with a Minor in College Teaching and Certificate in Qualitative Research (to be conferred in August 2021). She currently lives in New Jersey.